A comprehensive artbook for Soul Reaver fans from a fan

Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver's designers produced a multitude of amazing artworks throughout the project's development cycle. A wide variety of ideas were illustrated, but many were ultimately discarded. This book will present numerous designs by Arnold Ayala, Daniel Cabuco, and other artists, all of whom contributed to the quest to design the final world we all know and love to this day.

This book also serves as a means of explaining how I immersed myself in the art of texture archaeology, and how I enhanced Soul Reaver's original textures to meet the standards of the HD era. Featuring interviews with Daniel Cabuco and many prominent figures from the fan community, this book is the ultimate companion piece for any Legacy of Kain fan. I hope you will enjoy reading it, and that it will offer you a unique insight into the making of the game.

— Raina Audron

The Art of Soul Reaver

Dedicated to Amy Hennig,
who is a constant source of inspiration and an immense credit to the franchise,

and Daniel Cabuco,
whose insight, constructive feedback, endless passion, and generosity towards our fandom made all the difference.

The Art of Soul Reaver is an unofficial fan- made artbook written by Raina Audron. Legacy of Kain and Soul Reaver are trademarks of the Embracer Group and Crystal Dynamics. This publication can be freely distributed under the **CC BY-NC-SA** licence.

“Even thirteen years later, I’m humbled and gratified to have fans and colleagues come up to me and say how memorable the game was for them, or how it influenced them as young game designers. The series still has an enthusiastic fan base, and is remembered affectionately in ways we couldn’t have foreseen all those years ago.

I hope it’s remembered as a well-constructed game with an original vision and an engaging story, and as groundbreaking in terms of what we were able to achieve on the PlayStation at the time. Our approach to voice acting and performance was also innovative for the time, the way we brought the actors in to record their dialogue together rather than in isolation. The performance capture process we use on Uncharted *today – where we involve the actors as collaborators, and have them play the scenes together on the stage – owes its origins to the techniques we established for* Soul Reaver *fifteen years ago.”*

- Amy Hennig, PS BLOG

Foreword

Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver is one of those games that changes everything. I was a teenager when it came out and while I was aware of and had played *Blood Omen* it was *Soul Reaver* that really blew me away and captivated my mind for years afterwards. I know the same is true for many *Legacy of Kain* fans. *Soul Reaver* was such an ambitious and groundbreaking title that for a while it seemed to hold sway over an entire generation of gamers… and then the series declined and vanished, replaced by *Tomb Raiders* and *Uncharted* games in the popular consciousness.

It's been almost a quarter of a century since that game stole so many hearts but among those that do remember the fire still burns as bright and as passionately as ever and I'm proud to count myself and Raina Audron among them. I've worked for over a decade in documenting the *Legacy of Kain* series along with my cohorts Aevum and Raina Audron – and I've collaborated closely with Raina on a number of projects: chief among which is the *Soul Reaver* HD remaster that saw the light of day in 2022.

I've always been amazed at Raina's artistic output. For someone like me, who's not very artistically minded, her work and her output has been stunning and a constant source of inspiration. Raina was making videos and various *LoK* projects long before I met her, but it was the pandemic which really changed things for us. We'd already been producing material for various *LoK* projects before: we'd worked together advising for cancelled multiplayer *Nosgoth*, we'd moderated various forums, we'd produced a few videos and we'd even been lucky enough to be part of a team that had exposed the *Blood Omen* alpha in late 2018. But 2020 was going to be the biggest year yet – we knew we had in our possession some alpha builds of *Soul Reaver* that had all the legendary cut content still intact and we knew it would blow the collective minds of the fan base…

...And then the pandemic hit. Ultimately the result has been a mixed bag for the world and even in our personal lives, but for those final few months preparing for the *Soul Reaver* alpha release it really allowed us to flex our collaborative potential and "we'll do a few articles and comparisons" quickly spiralled into a whole series of video content. It was exhausting but probably one of the most rewarding experiences of my life to see it all come together.

A few months later and another watershed moment. We sat together to watch the reveal of what would become *Assassin's Creed: Valhalla* with popular artist Boss Logic – whose work we'd both admired. Over the course of a few hours he took various pieces of illustrations, photos, materials and remoulded them into a brand new artwork to publicise that series.

And watching it was like a lightbulb coming on and I saw various puzzle pieces click together in Raina's head. She was very excited that night and soon after, she'd started a new project.

We'd long had an understanding of some of the technical processes behind the development of Soul Reaver – it kinda comes with the territory – and the modding that could be done with various tools, but Raina's idea was to fully upgrade the game taking out the textures upscaling them and where necessary, replacing them to fit them back in using an emulator called Flycast. Like *Soul Reaver* itself, this was ambitious considering she'd literally have to manually extract the textures, unscramble the jumbled files, upscale them and then reassemble them into texture sheets to put them back in. It was a painstaking process that took two weeks of non-stop working but when she was finished it was a glorious sight and one she – and the community – were rightly proud of.

But a little bit of a – you might call it unskilled – graphical improvement was perhaps never going to be enough for Raina Audron to rest on her laurels, and some interesting developments in early 2021 led to a majority of the original source textures of *Soul Reaver* being tracked down. These images we'd seen for years and suddenly, here they were in glorious high definition in detail we'd never seen before. So this spurred the next phase – an even more ambitious plan to go all out for something of a full remaster. Despite the rumours we were pretty sure there wasn't going to be an official one, so why not meet that fan expectation in a different way?

Of course, we perhaps weren't going to be able to find absolutely everything that way so for much of the year alongside implementing and reintegrating those original textures we went on a texture hunt like I've never seen. We scoured art books, libraries, collections, museums and gardens to find as many of the original artworks as we could. Those we couldn't find we created or found in the world or in nature – you have no idea how much time we spent in stately homes or royal gardens taking close up pictures of a particularly suitable looking section of rock or wall that would do for a texture – in some cases my own gardening supplemented things.

In the end I think you'll agree that Raina has worked some wizardry that may – once again – be the definitive and most striking edition of *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver* that has been created thus far. And it definitely caught the attention in the right places, because it got Raina hired into the industry. That changed our lives and her skills were instrumental in producing *Tomb Raider 1-3 Remastered*… and other projects yet to be announced.

So that brings us to this book. We started creating this in 2022 as an accompaniment to the HD remaster, but with all the changes that went on it's taken a couple of years to bring this together and now we stand on the threshold of a new era: it's approaching the 2nd anniversary of the HD remaster and the 25th of *Soul Reaver* itself – and it seems the *LoK* franchise is finally stirring and beginning to produce official content once more. So even more than it was a couple of years ago, it's worth putting it into perspective because it may not be enough to simply put a remaster out there: going through this whole process we really feel that it's worth showing people the talent and ambition of those developers who first sat down in the late 90s to start work on this immortal legend and to show how we've brought it back to life – as best we can – for the modern age. We hope you will enjoy.

— Bazielim

The Beginning

While nowadays they helm the ever-popular *Tomb Raider* franchise, and have even attempted to tame Marvel's *Avengers* (with lesser fortunes in the latter case), Crystal Dynamics has enjoyed a rich history in game development reaching back to the 1990s. Founded in 1992, and already turning heads in 1993 while run by former 20th Century Fox president Strauss Zelnick, they decided to become the first official publisher for the 3DO console.

However, this system was doomed to failure, and they redirected their gaze towards its new 3D graphics-capable competitors of the time, the PlayStation and Sega Saturn. One notable effort released on the 3DO, the 2D platformer *Gex*, was swiftly ported to these new platforms.

In 1996, Crystal struck up a publishing deal with developer Silicon Knights on a project codenamed *The Pillars of Nosgoth*. The concept was described as a dark, mature *Legend of Zelda* featuring vampires and Gothic themes.

However, the studio struggled with technical issues, long loading times, and a bloated interconnected world design. Midway through development, Crystal intervened and lent in-house support to the team. Considerable downsizing, reshuffling, and cutting followed to push the game across the finish line. By its release, the final product had been renamed *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain*.

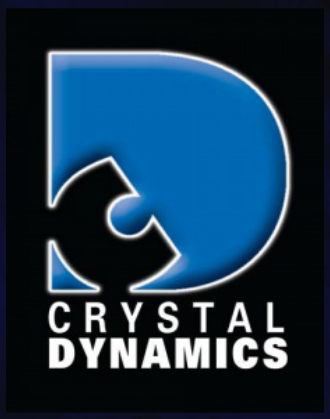
Despite a range of projects and publishing deals, Crystal's losses began to stack to the tune of $80 million – it was then that they decided to shift the company's direction to game development instead, culminating in a 1998 buyout from Eidos Interactive which would change everything.

The descent had destroyed me and yet... I lived.

Eidos brought new investments with them, and so Crystal initiated work on a new project, *Shifter*, heavily influenced by John Milton's epic, *Paradise Lost*. According to senior designer Richard Lemarchand, *Shifter* focused on the torture of a a fallen angel of death, capable of switching between two realms of existence. This original idea, devised by Amy Hennig and Seth Carus, was soon reconceptualised as *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver* – a sequel to *Blood Omen*. Hennig and Lemarchand each cite *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past* as a major influence, being both developers' favourite game of all time thanks to its inclusion of two contrasting worlds and the player's ability to move between them.

Consequentially, this world-shifting mechanic was an integral part of *Soul Reaver*, one of its first core features to be developed. The twisted pillars and corridors found in the game's haunting "spectral realm" were particularly inspired by *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, a 1920 German silent horror film. Its main protagonist, Cesare, is a somnabulistic figure manipulated into committing a series of murders. His visage – sunken eyes, a distinctive scarf around his neck – undoubtedly influenced Raziel's own unique appearance.

> *"We have a huge amount to learn from past games. I do think people are now learning the lessons that are there to be learned from the design of historical games, but perhaps we could all stand to look back to the history of games a little bit more than we do."*
>
> — Richard Lemarchand, *PLAY UK* issue 248



The development of *Soul Reaver* began in 1997, alongside that of *Blood Omen 2*. The game was first scheduled to release at the end of 1998, but it soon became apparent that this was not an attainable goal, and its release was delayed first to January; then February; and finally to August 1999, with significant portions – including the entire third act of the story, and the Reaver Forges – truncated or entirely cut.

Hennig explained:

> *"To hit the August '99 release date, we had to cut the last few levels of the game, and end on a cliffhanger that set up* Soul Reaver 2. *Originally, Raziel was going to hunt down and destroy all of his former brothers as well as Kain – and then, using his newly-acquired abilities, he would've activated the long-dormant pipes of the Silenced Cathedral to wipe out the remaining vampires of Nosgoth with a sonic blast. Only then would he realize that he'd been the Elder God's pawn all along, that the purging of the vampires had devastating consequences, and that the only way to set things right would be to use Moebius' time-streaming device to go back in time and alter history (in the sequel)."*
>
> — Amy Hennig, *PlayStation Blog*

Chapter 1: The Modding Scene

Early beginnings

When I first explored texture artistry in 2012, I started out with a small project for *Legacy of Kain: Defiance,* focusing on just a few details. I had never been pleased with the appearances of the characters in that game, preferring their previous looks in *Soul Reaver 2*. In *Defiance*, they had an exaggerated, almost cartoonish feel to them, which I always felt somewhat clashed with the gritty and realistic environments they inhabited. This was my first attempt at improving the textures on Raziel – narrowing his eyes, and restoring his old cowl, wings, torso, and armbands, all from *Soul Reaver 2*:

I also attempted to improve the environments, such as the Pillars of Nosgoth, as their original textures appeared too pixelated, and I felt I could enhance them further. Again, using *Soul Reaver 2*'s textures, the result was significantly improved:

Luckily, a year later, a super-talented artist and *Legacy of Kain* fan – Patrick Johnson, aka The Hylden – took it upon himself to enhance *Defiance*'s textures, creating a comprehensive texture pack including a revamped Kain, Raziel, Moebius, Mortanius, Turel, and Janos. Other improvements and changes included those to the Reavers and their effects, prisoners, and female vampire hunters (now resembling their *Soul Reaver 2* counterparts). Patrick's attention to detail and realism was always a huge inspiration to me, and, as seen below, his takes on Raziel and Kain are impressive. To this day, his texture pack remains the best available for *Defiance*. His main goal was to adapt details from the characters' FMV models, which differed from their in-game incarnations.

Every fibre on Raziel's cowl is now visible, and his face and torso texture structures have been corrected. No more wide-eyed Raziel! Kain much better aligns with his FMV self, and although issues with his eyes and "crown" being too far apart were not possible to address as part of his model's geometry, these new textures add extra detail which was absent from the original version – positioning his scar in the correct place, and ensuring individual materials better resemble cloth, leather, skin, etc.

Other, brand new texture projects for *Blood Omen 2* and *Defiance* have also materialised. More about these various modding endeavours will be discussed in the community section of this book.

Texture hunt

When I released the HD texture pack for *Soul Reaver* in August 2020, I did not expect to return to it in future. It was primarily the new suite of features in a Dreamcast emulator, Flycast, which prompted me to revisit texture modding in general. This began with the emergence of Raziel mods by the users KainDracula and EagleEye on Reddit, and the advent of game-wide texture upscaling mods, which have become more commonplace in recent years. Wishing to offer my own interpretations of Raziel (as I had never been satisfied with his Dreamcast model's strange eyes) and Kain, I decided to run the entire game through an upscaling program – a process which was kindly executed by Allard – while salvaging some unused textures from prototype builds of *Soul Reaver*.

Despite the automation of a huge chunk of the upscaling process, the characters required a personal flourish, and thus Kain, Raziel, and Ariel received manual touch-ups. However, even programmatic upscaling for the environments did not deliver straightforward enhancement – due to the way this process works, "edge bleeding" which negatively affects neighbouring textures is often introduced, and this can only be eliminated by hand. Another consequence is the appearance of faint blue/green lines which can span entire images and considerably disrupt the texture (see below); the sharper the image, the more pronounced these will be.

I was obliged to iron out a significant number of these artefacts which plagued almost all repeatable textures (e.g. mountains/rocks). The full process of preparing the texture pack took me just over two weeks of work from morning to evening, and I was exhausted by the end. At the time, I was ill-equipped to properly beautify the game, as source textures for the game were unavailable. However, this changed in 2021, when I succeeded in tracking down several texture reference books and started to build my own texture portfolio.

This prompted me to search for more resources and purchase several assets for use in the retexturing process. I also started a small collection of photographs, focusing in particular on materials which we did not already have to hand. I was surprised how ordinary surfaces around one's house can suddenly begin to look appealing, and found myself constantly contemplating where I could apply them in the game.

At this point, there was no way back, and I became immersed in the world of thousands of texture sheets. With each new area I completed, I felt relief that another stage of the task was over, yet simultaneously already felt eager to begin work on the next. Though I have spent several hundreds of hours on this project, I do not regret taking it on. I will cite the character Mordin from the *Mass Effect* series, as his famous speech was my go-to inspirational quote throughout the whole process, especially when things started to feel tedious and endless:

"Had to be me... Someone else might have gotten it wrong."
— Mordin, *Mass Effect 3*

Texture Archaeology

cobble_stone

Texture archaeology is a relatively new term, and if you ever consider initiating a graphical enhancement project or remaster yourself, it is a practice you will have no choice but to delve into. Be warned, however, as I liken it to searching for a needle in a haystack – many older texture CDs are only accessible if bought second-hand, or found in archives or libraries which still possess a copy.

The journey began in July 2020, when a reflective texture from *Mario 64* caught the attention of internet users (see Kid Leaves Stoop's in-depth YouTube video – which elaborates how one specific cobblestone texture has been reused over and over in many games by Nintendo, Rare, and others). Strange though it may seem, this investigation into the origins of an ordinary photo of some rocks was an important milestone for texture artists, as it led to further discoveries. Often I would input terms into search engines which led me to the sources I sought after several hours, but sometimes days of searching were necessary. Patience and attention to detail is essential when archaeologically browsing through hundreds of images.

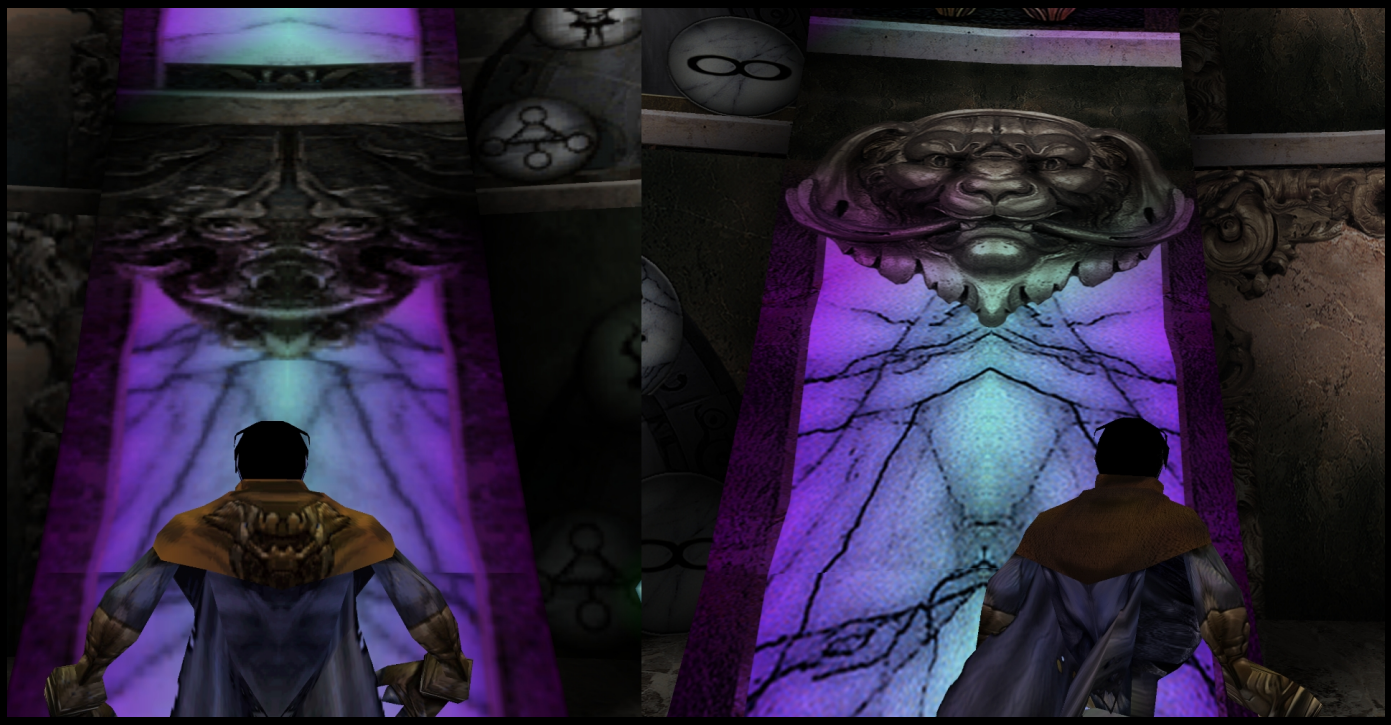
When a particular source is not found, a texture artist must resort to either replacing the original texture with an entirely different element (from e.g. photographs), or painting a brand new one from scratch. *Soul Reaver*'s developers combined both practices, scanning books and deriving material from CD-ROMs as the base for their in-game textures. In my HD Remaster project, this was achieved either by:

1. **Replacement with HD versions of the originals**

2. **Replacement with a new texture entirely**

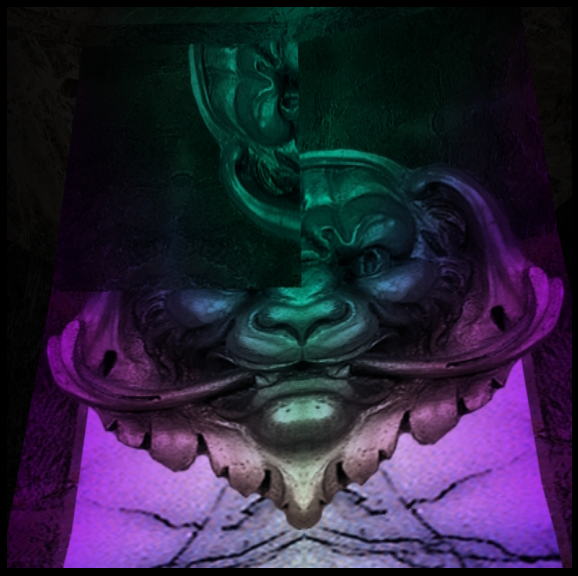
3. **Replacement with the upscaled originals**

Since I was no longer merely upscaling in-game assets, every single texture needed to be hand-picked and edited manually. I continued to rely on upscaling to cover some textures, though this often yielded poor results and compelled me to source substitute images. As much as I would always have preferred to utilise the original HD source images in all cases, many of these originals were not as high-quality as I had hoped, leading me to rely on substitutions. In most cases, I made my best effort to adhere to a similar look and art style (using Islamic-patterned textures for the Sanctuary of the Clans and the Ruined City, for example).



An example of a substitution when the original texture was not available

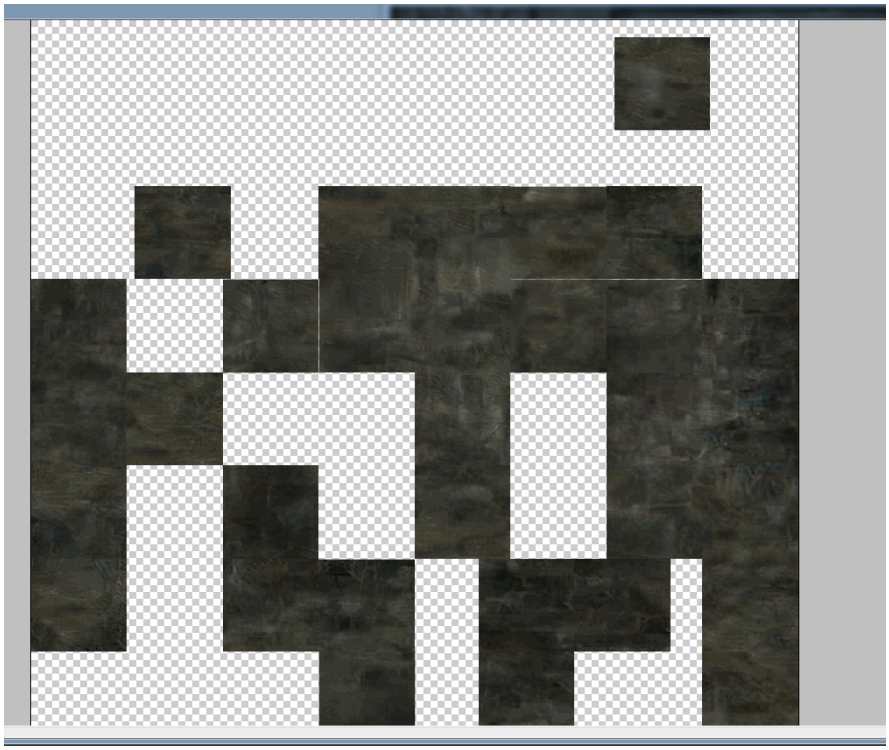
Observing the game's textures in higher resolution, however, uncovered the flaws of their UV mapping. Vertices had not always been placed at the edges of textures – they were a few pixels short, leaving the impression that each "square" was cut off. The only means of correcting this was to shrink the squares slightly inward and then hand-position them until they matched their surrounding counterparts. This was a tedious process, and I applied it only to a handful of murals, where the mismatching textures were too noticeable for purpose.



Another flaw which has become much more apparent with the introduction of sharper textures is the presence of misplaced or misoriented segments. While previously these blended well enough with surrounding textures to go unnoticed, they now stick out like a sore thumb. Unfortunately, this problem is not one I could tackle as I am only equipped to edit the textures themselves, not their application to models throughout the game – a frustrating constraint.

Fifty shades of (rock) grey

In order to replace the old textures, I needed to manually reassemble them to their original size, which in some cases produced rather large texture sheets. This was the most time-consuming step of the process, especially when differences between textures were sometimes so negligible (e.g. a darker speck) that it took hours, if not days, to correctly piece them together. They are also seamlessly tiled, so I could often only guess where their edges began and ended. Sourcing the originals was key to understanding their appropriate orientation, which I could compare to that displayed within the game world. On the right, you can observe a single texture sheet with several disparate texture tiles mixed together. My task was to disentangle this mess and reconstruct the original texture before it was divided into pieces (see below).

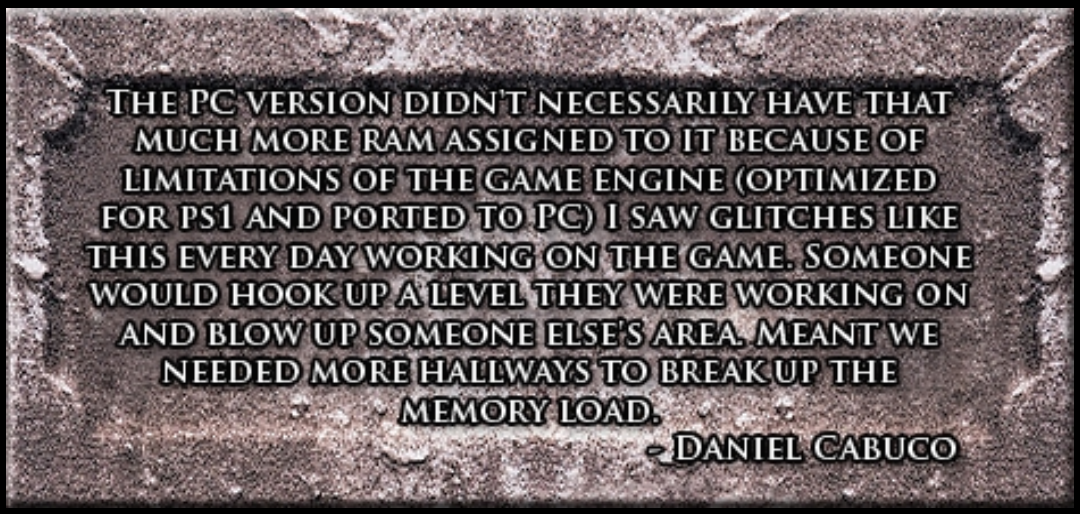


An example of a work-in-progress wall from the Fire Glyph area

After a given sheet was fully assembled, my next task was to either find a suitable replacement, or source the same texture in higher quality. Frequently, even with the many resources at hand, I was unable to pinpoint the source through any means, and had to rely on a substitute instead. The next stage of the procedure was to apply the new textures. This is where what I refer to as the **“polka-dot method”** comes into play. With many texture tiles being rotated the wrong way or too similar to discriminate between, there is sometimes no easy means of correctly visualising which texture is which within the game world. As such, I decided to tag each square with a specific colour to determine which position they appear in within the game.

Disco in the Underworld!

It was not possible to enhance every aspect of the game, unfortunately. User interface elements, particularly 2D sprites such as the glyph icons and various particle effects, depend on pixel-perfect accuracy; otherwise they will appear corrupted – i.e. edges will not display properly, be rendered white, or contain various artefacts. For this reason, I chose to leave them unmodified; only the Glyph and health upgrade icons were updated.


THE PC VERSION DIDN'T NECESSARILY HAVE THAT MUCH MORE RAM ASSIGNED TO IT BECAUSE OF LIMITATIONS OF THE GAME ENGINE (OPTIMIZED FOR PS1 AND PORTED TO PC) I SAW GLITCHES LIKE THIS EVERY DAY WORKING ON THE GAME. SOMEONE WOULD HOOK UP A LEVEL THEY WERE WORKING ON AND BLOW UP SOMEONE ELSE'S AREA. MEANT WE NEEDED MORE HALLWAYS TO BREAK UP THE MEMORY LOAD.
- DANIEL CABUCO

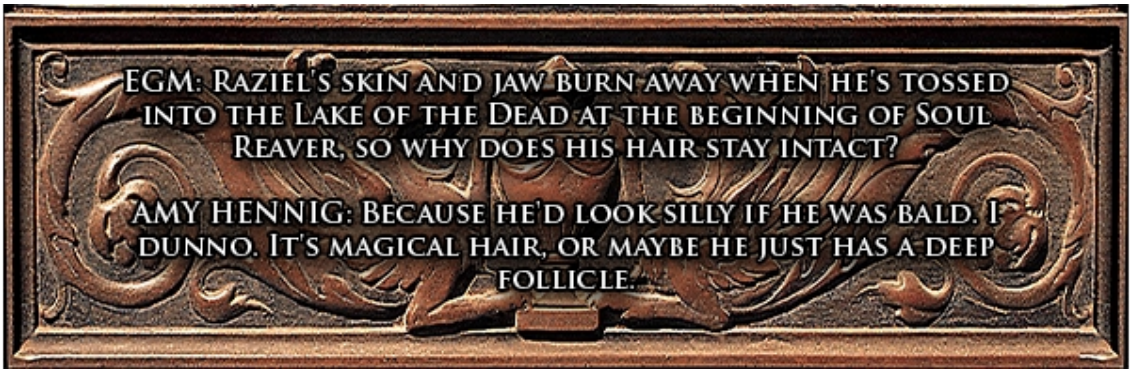
Chapter 2: Characters

WRAITH RAZIEL

In this chapter, we will revisit the origin of Raziel as explored by artists Arnold Ayala and Daniel Cabuco, and investigate the reasons behind his distinct appearance. His design is among the chief reasons why *Soul Reaver* captured the attention of audiences to begin with – a protagonist with a missing jaw and cadaverous form is not an everyday sight in the realm of video games. Amy Hennig and Seth Carus created a fallen hero, an angel of death, who sets out to avenge the betrayals inflicted on him by his own brethren and his master, Kain.

The team experimented with different designs, uncertain whether Raziel should have hair or a protrusive nose. Similarly, the loss of his jaw was not immediately conceptualised. Hennig reasoned that he would look silly without hair, so it was determined that he would retain a haircut similar to that of his vampire self, though his trip through the Abyss results in the loss of his ponytail. Nasal coverage serves to provide support for the cowl around his neck. More creepy, skeletal motifs were reserved for the vampire wraith enemies instead.

EARLY RAZIEL SKETCH


EGM: RAZIEL'S SKIN AND JAW BURN AWAY WHEN HE'S TOSSED INTO THE LAKE OF THE DEAD AT THE BEGINNING OF SOUL REAVER, SO WHY DOES HIS HAIR STAY INTACT?
AMY HENNIG: BECAUSE HE'D LOOK SILLY IF HE WAS BALD. I DUNNO. IT'S MAGICAL HAIR, OR MAYBE HE JUST HAS A DEEP FOLLICLE.

Among the most elaborate aspects of Raziel's design are his boots. They almost resemble pieces of mechanical equipment, with several layers wrapping around his legs to create a distinctive pattern.

Raziel boot detail from promotional materials

Cabuco, the creature art lead, explained that Kain's lieutenants have bolted their protective toe guards into their skin – unlike Kain, who wears them in open-toed fashion and does not require any additional armour. After Raziel is cast into the Abyss, he sheds the frontal armour, leaving his toes fully exposed. While the metal piece reaches underneath his feet in concept art, this detail is only evident in the FMV introduction cinematic, with none of Raziel's in-game models adopting a similar setup.

Raziel's wing design also underwent many iterations before landing on the tattered remains observable in the final work. The team toyed with the idea of a residual bone structure, but this was rejected, with Raziel's bones entirely ripped from his back in the intro sequence (to prevent potential escape); only soft tissue remains. Within the game and several promotional rendered poses, Raziel must grab the edges of his wings in order to glide, which then stretch and form a "double parachute". He can glide whilst holding the Soul Reaver and most other weapons, but not when encumbered with heavier objects such as boulders or vases.

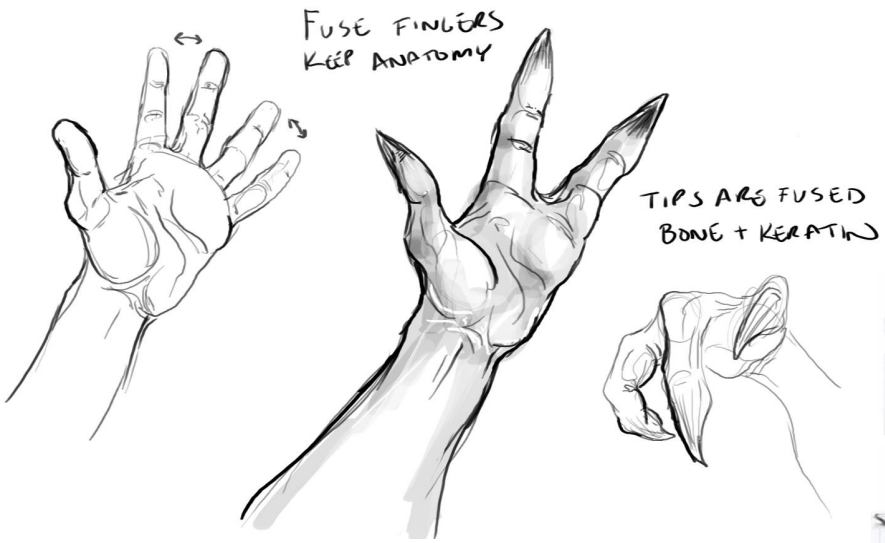
Raziel's blue skin was influenced by the Hindu deity Vishnu, and his broken wings borrow from descriptions of fallen angels from the Bible. This blend of divergent cultural backgrounds resulted in a unique look which lingers in the minds of many people, even 25 years after the game's launch in 1999.

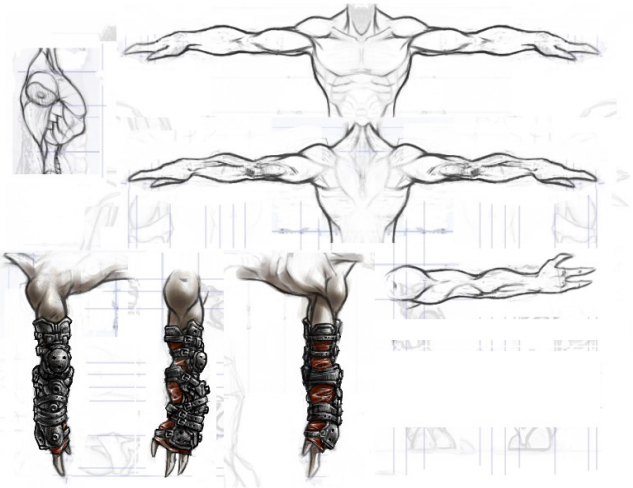
While tridactyl claws were present in *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain* as a trait of the vampire character Vorador, *Soul Reaver* extended their usage to all of the game's vampires.

MICHAEL CASTS OUT REBEL ANGELS.
ILLUSTRATION BY GUSTAVE DORÉ FOR JOHN MILTON'S PARADISE LOST.

Similar aesthetics were applied to many video game characters in the 1990s, when fully separated fingers were technically prohibitive, such as fists with drawn-on fingers as in the case of Lara Croft, or four fingers with separated thumbs. For *Soul Reaver*, the ubiquity of cloven hands was rationalised as a trait which Kain developed over time and passed onto his offspring. This solution made the characters' hands easier to animate while retaining separate fingers.

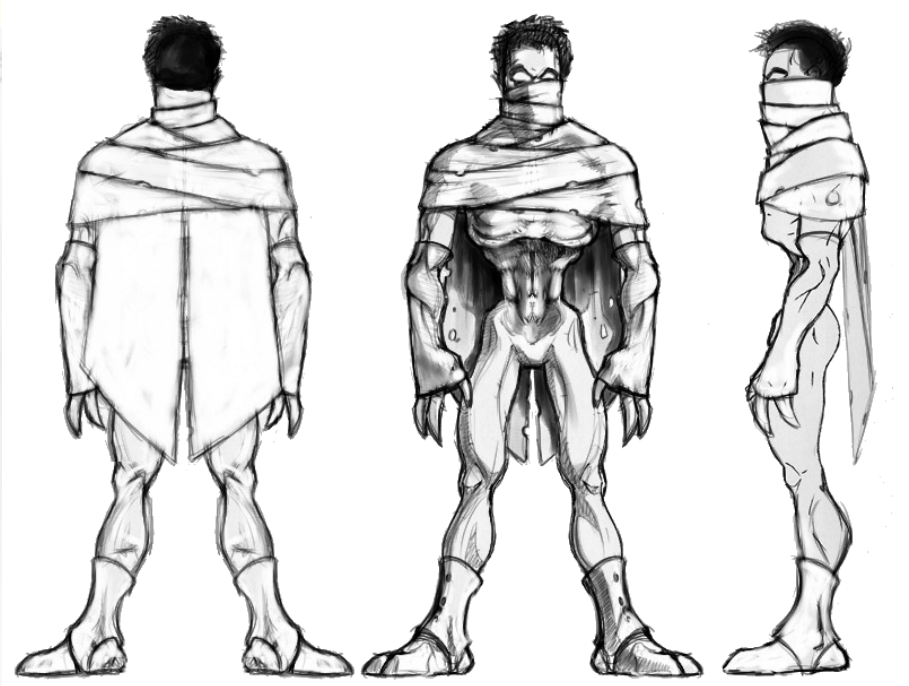
Cabuco explained that the team sought to retain the vampires' original human anatomy and have pairs of each of their four fingers merge together, forming a larger one with a pointy tip. Despite their bony texture, they are not rigid and can be bent.





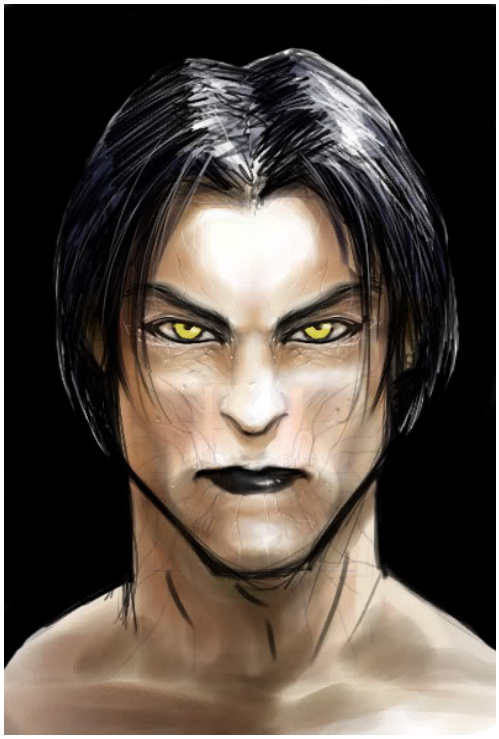
EGM: Why does Raziel's cowl and boots pass to the Spectral Realm with him, but he can't carry other solid items like spears or torches from the Material World?

AH: The tattered remains of his clothing aren't literally material objects anymore; they're more like "organic" manifestations of their former states, now melded into Raziel's being just like his flesh and bones. From a philosophical point of view, Raziel doesn't really literally have a physical body anymore anyway—his appearance is just an illusion, a spiritual manifestation. Therefore all his accouterments are just a projection of his spiritual state. Is that convoluted enough?



EARLY
SHIFTER
CONCEPT

LIEUTENANT RAZIEL

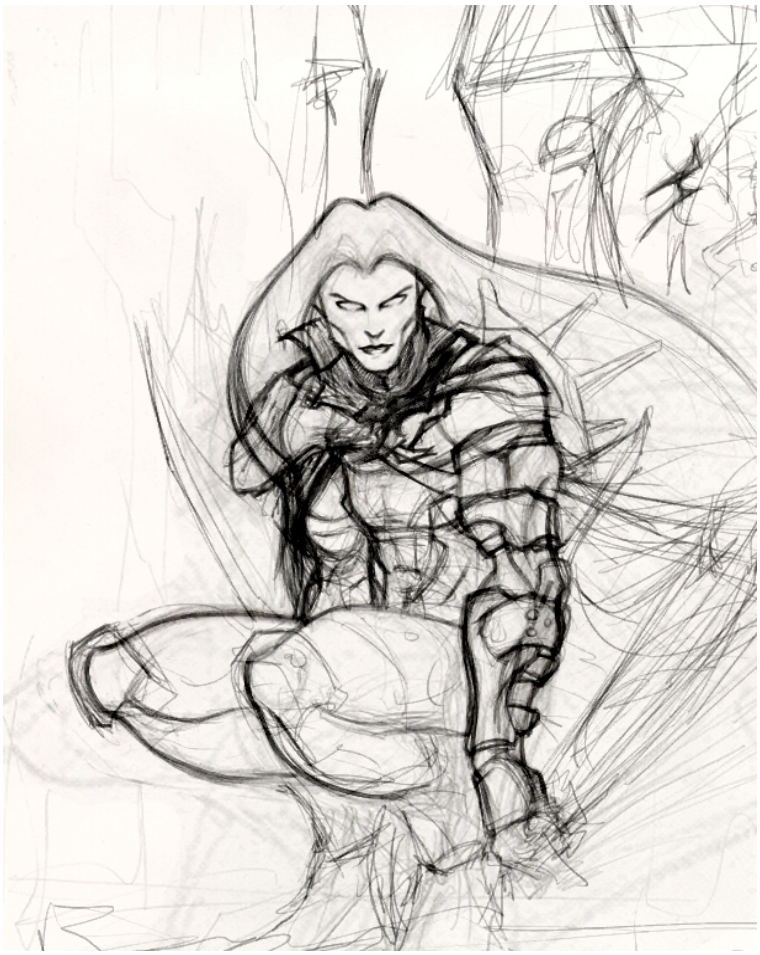


The team was tasked not just with designing a brand new protagonist, but also his vampiric form which would appear exclusively in the intro, together with his master and brethren. Cabuco explains the reasons behind their specific choice of attire:

"There's always been an undercurrent of [S&M] influences with vampirism. The two seem to go hand in hand. Even self mutilation is no big deal if you heal with a little blood (Ever see the bar scene in Blade 2 *where the guy has his spine exposed?). The low cut pants were all part of this design. Living in [San Francisco]/Silicon Valley, that kind of stuff is no big deal to see on the streets (I once saw a biker in SF walking with tight tight tight leather chaps and ping pong paddles hanging off his belt). So we used this influence to make up a unique style that was appealing (Seth also pushed us in this direction as well, he was big into goth culture)."*

Cabuco further explains that alternative costumes for the lieutenants were given some consideration, but with only the opening sequence to portray them, the team's focus lay with their primary outfits. Their bare-chested appearance reinforced their vanity (or perceived vanity, in Melchiah's case). Unique helmets were planned for each, but went unused on the basis that these would obscure their faces in the intro. In an ironic twist, their Sarafan incarnations in *Soul Reaver 2* did receive helmets for the opposite reason; as their Sarafan selves appear only in-game, helmets enabled the art team to conceal their faces and avoid having to animate their mouths.

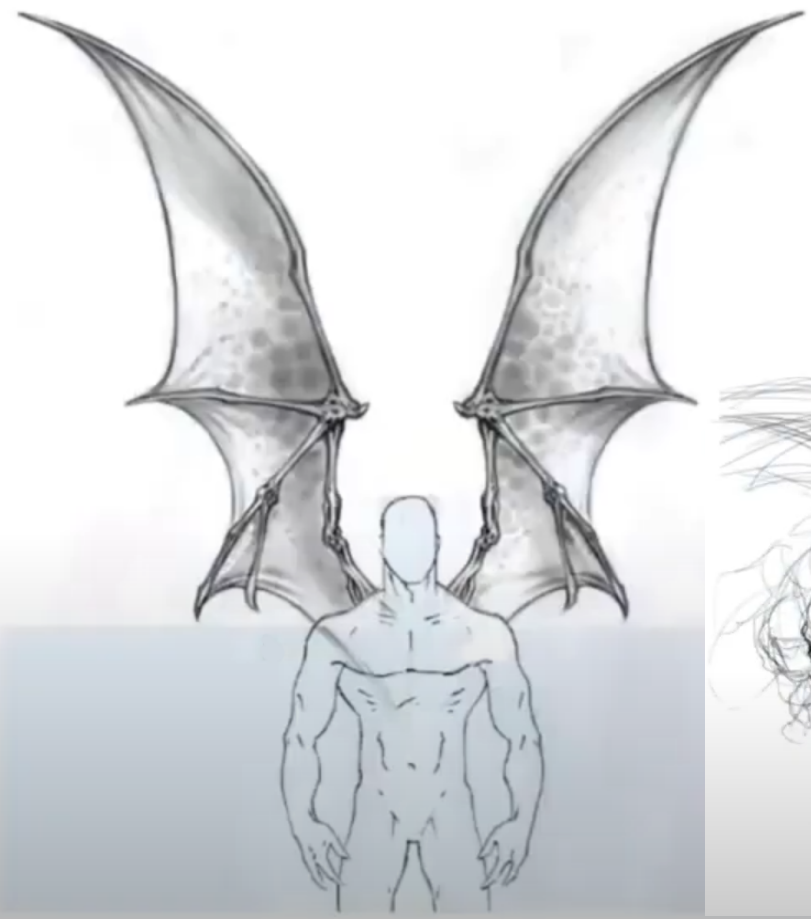
Early designs for Raziel’s wings presumed that they would attach to his arms, but this proved too difficult to animate, and they were ultimately positioned on his lower back instead. This portrayal complements his dual spine, which is only revealed after his skin and internal organs are burnt away in the Abyss. Cabuco elaborates:



“Remember that all of Kain's gifts were tainted, and if Vampire Raziel was left alone, he would have devolved into a bat or dragon like creature, similar to his brethren. The dual spine was the very beginning of that, and was part of his central anatomy as a winged Vampire. I think I would have designed him as a dual winged, dual spined vampire. When he got turned into a wraith, it simply revealed his spine since his flesh was burned away.”

These sketches show the evolution of Raziel’s wings, from initial experiments in which they attached to the sides of his arms and reached all the way towards the tips of his fingers. Once it was decided that they would attach to Raziel’s lower back, there was now a further need for them to fold inwards so they would not impede the character’s movement.

Cabuco illustrated a close-up of all the wing joints stretching and bending to allow for the wings to tuck in behind the character’s back. This also allowed for a dramatic reveal when unfurling, as observed in the final intro cinematic.



RENDERS BY BOYD LAKE

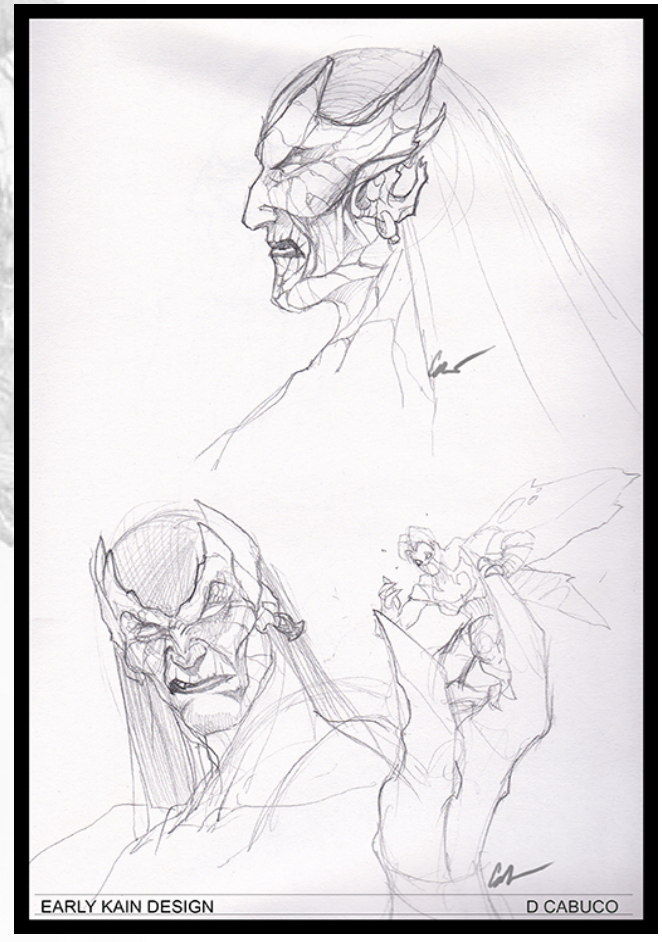
KAIN

EARLY KAIN SKETCH D. CABUCO

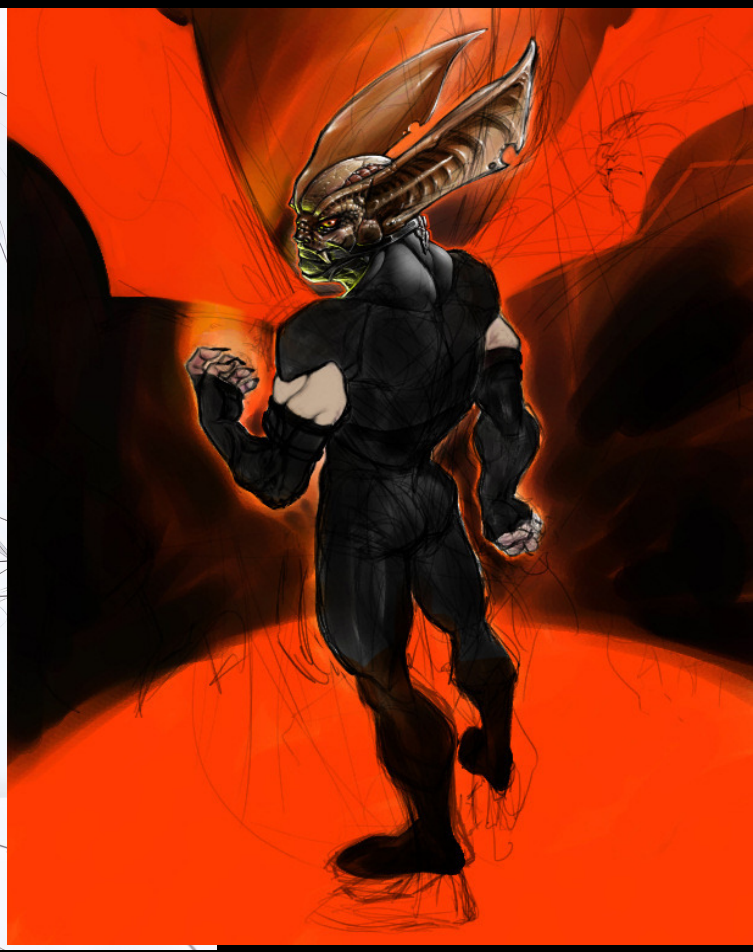
Kain was always the central figure of the series, but, after *Blood Omen*, the team felt that moving him into an antagonistic role for *Soul Reaver* was the correct direction to take, particularly upon casting the “bad” ending of *Blood Omen* as the canonical choice. This new direction also mandated a redesign of his appearance, as *Soul Reaver* would be set over a millennium later.

“I designed Kain to be the embodiment of his own hubris. He saw himself as a god, so I gave his skin a golden tint, and a crown of bone forged from his own will. At the time, I thought of him as an antagonist, but one with a lot of depth and dimension. Not just a typical bad-guy, but someone who had a particular point of view that went far beyond what anyone else could imagine. It didn't feel weird at all to have him 'revert' to his anti-heroic roots, because I don't think we changed him drastically. Rather, we revealed his grand plan, and showed that while his actions may have seemed villainous from a certain point of view, they were part of a grand scheme. I think he evolved nicely into someone I really enjoyed and could relate to.” — Daniel Cabuco

The sketch on the right was the final design by Cabuco which Hennig enthusiastically approved, declaring “that’s Kain!” With his face structure decided, the artists were tasked with finding an attire appropriate for this new incarnation. Kain’s default outfit in *Blood Omen* was the Iron Armour, but throughout the course of the game, he acquired four alternative suits as well – Bone, Chaos, Flesh, and Wraith, each with discrete properties. However, after centuries of maturation from a fledgling vampire into an adult, Kain has evolved beyond the need for armour altogether. His skin has sufficiently hardened to offer protection of its own, becoming a form of living, organic armour instead.


EARLY KAIN DESIGN D CABUCO

Early Kain concept



“I was trying to convey Kain as the villain, and how his arrogance might have manifested on him over a millennia of evolution. Some basic words I was given as guidance: Ancient, Arrogant, Powerful. I wasn't sure yet how the costume or look of Kain would be yet, but I did know in my first stab that I wanted him to manifest a crown in some way (some more subtle, some more overt).” — Daniel Cabuco

Although certain renders appear to feature Kain with green-tinted skin, this can be largely attributed to the lighting of those scenes. Kain's base skin colour is golden. The art team continued to experiment with this bare-chested look for Kain, a red cape draped over his shoulder (see below). As Kain's personal symbol had not yet been designed at the time, this early depiction uses Raziel's inverted personal insignia as a placeholder, one which carried over to Kain's BBI statue and early versions of the opening FMV. Cabuco further explains details concerning Kain's skin:

"Kain's skin is hardened to an armor (more flexible in some areas than others) which serves to protect him from sunlight and weapon damage. This replaced his need to have traditional forms of armor, and shows off his power (and Hubris to some extent). The color is somewhat golden/skin colored, but not high metallic. His skin is not made up of scales. Chitinous refers to the exoskeletal nature of his skin. The scaly part was in reference to the actual texture of his skin not what it's made up of (ie if you ran your hands over it, it would be tough but smooth, with little aberrations on it).

Really I haven't thought that deeply on how Kain would evolve, because we didn't get into preproduction for it." — Daniel Cabuco

Cabuco added in a small detail – a callback to *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain* – by transforming the signet ring which the younger Kain received from the elder vampire Vorador upon their first meeting into an earring. Its shape evolved during production, with Kain's early renders featuring a golden earring (see lower right), until this was altered to a design much more faithful to Vorador's gift (see right).

Though the in-game model of Kain did not have a sufficient polygon budget to display the earring, he is seen sporting it in GlyphX's intro cinematic and in later entries in the series.

Vorador's ring in Blood Omen

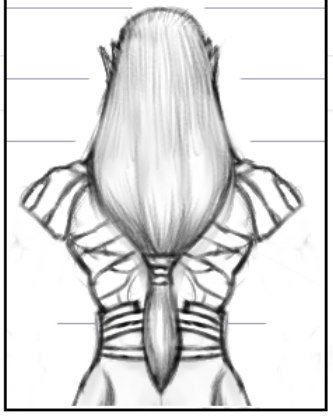
Another important aspect of Kain's physical prowess is his height. In comparison to Raziel, Kain is a towering figure (most overt when contrasting their in-game models). Cabuco explained he intended Kain to evoke ideals of Adonis (see left) – the Greek mortal lover of Aphrodite, regarded as an archetypal handsome youth – which translates into Kain's tall stature, between seven and eight heads tall.

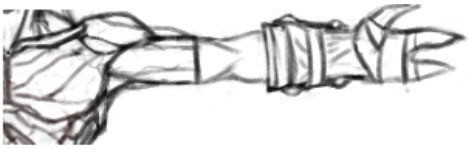
Kain is also depicted in official English and German comic books associated with *Soul Reaver*. In Top Cow's comic (see lower left), Kain's towering height is especially apparent in comparison to the crouching Lieutenant Raziel.

YOU ARE THE FIRST TO EVOLVE BEYOND YOUR CREATOR, RAZIEL.
THE FIRST TO BEAR THE GIFT OF WINGS.
BUT YOU MUST REMEMBER, KAIN IS A JEALOUS GOD.

Um seine Armeen zu befehligen
und sich zu erheben, stieg Kain in die Unterwelt hinab,
auf der Suche nach einer Seele, die er in einem Körper erkennen könnte...
Und so erschuf er
mich...
RAZIEL!

Kain's early and final design sheets





ARIEL

Ariel was a tormented character already present in *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain*, aiding Kain in his quest to assassinate the corrupted Circle of Nine. She was depicted wearing white robes intermingled with bandages, half of her face consisting of exposed skull with a missing eye – an injury perhaps incurred at the time of her brutal death.

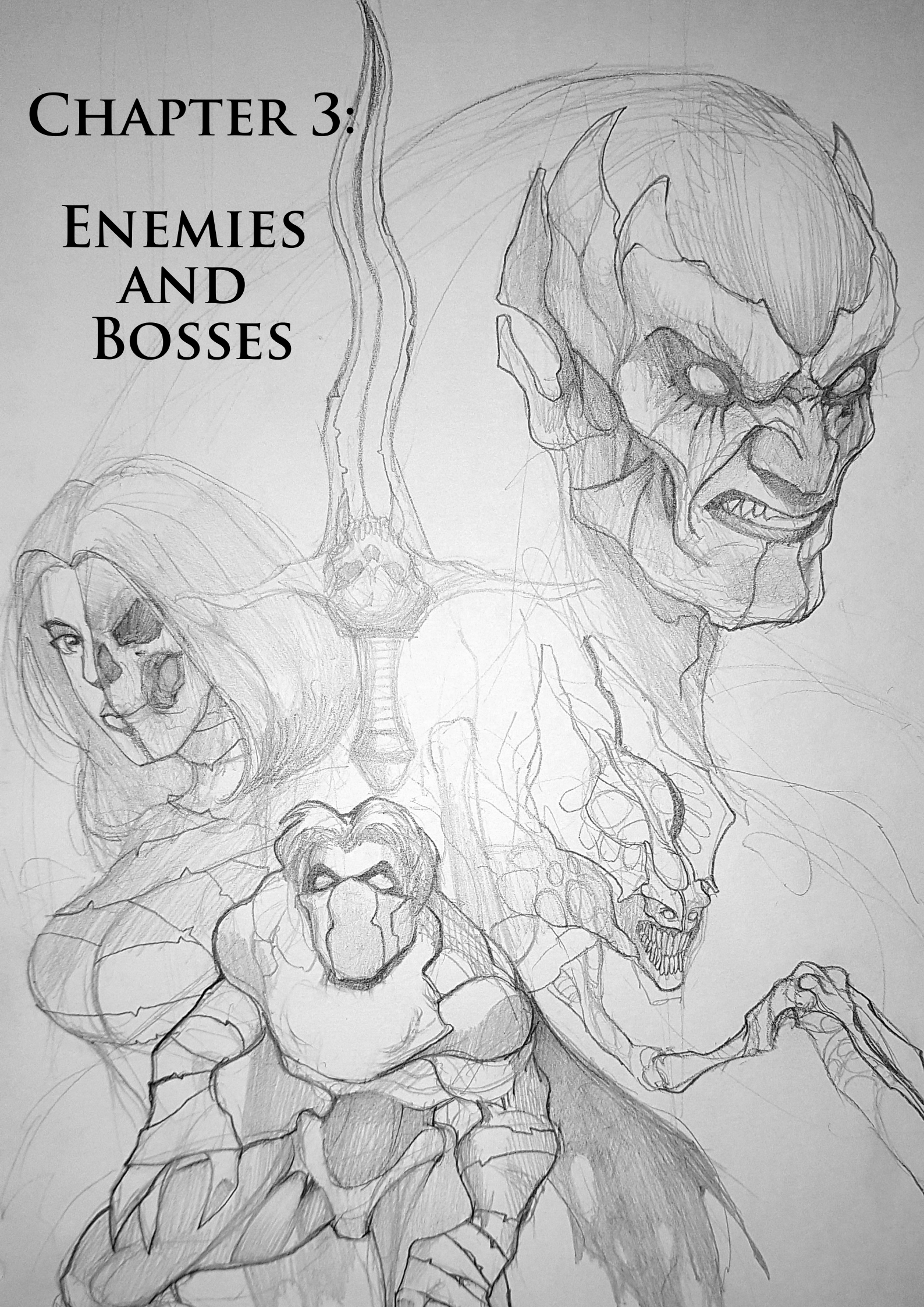
This depiction was largely retained in *Soul Reaver*, the main difference being the dress's recolour from white to black – potentially to illustrate how the Pillars' corruption affected Ariel over time, leaving her half-rotted and blighted while bound to the Pillars for an eternity. Originally, stage directions prescribed unhinged, hysterical voice-over for Ariel. However, the casting director toned her demeanour down considerably for the final release.

Her death was portrayed in *Blood Omen* in a cutscene in which she was shown to wear a red garb, but after she became a spectre, its colour changed to a grey/white.

Ariel as she appeared in Blood Omen:

Chapter 3:

Enemies and Bosses



The Empire

Details concerning the individual clans and the empire itself were intentionally left vague, inviting the player to use their imagination to fill in the blanks. Little was set in stone, as the production of *Soul Reaver* itself did not necessitate much elaboration, but Cabuco later offered fans an insight into Kain's court. He describes how Kain, the clans, and other factions interacted with each other:

"I believe the empire started out as a group of elite vampires that Kain raised to topple a corrupt human world. As they gained power, each lieutenant began to create their own vampires, and once they conquered Nosgoth's major armies, began to vie for favor or majority with Kain. Lust for power, hubris, greed and jealousy would cause them to begin plotting against each other. (Similar to what happened to the Romans)

Alliances and agreements would be formed, broken and reformed with only Kain to bring them to heel. And they would all be jealous of Raziel's place as Kain's most favored." — Daniel Cabuco

The analogy to the Roman empires is apt in this case – Kain would act as Caesar, but once their common enemy fell, the factions within his empire would turn on each other, with he himself opting to remain out of these petty clan wars. However, he would find time to visit his lieutenants and converse with them whenever boredom struck. Any challenges or disagreements would be quickly dealt with, his screaming Soul Reaver flaying anything alive in its path.

When not entangled in intrigues and betraying each other, the clans would hone their skills (of which they had many, as immortal beings) in their spare time. Melchahim would devise methods on how best to slow the decay of their bodies, Zephonim would practice the art of scaling walls, Dumahim would perfect their weapon-forging talents, and Turelim would hone their telekinetic abilities on captured victims. Cabuco also touches upon the subject of religion. Whereas he does not believe the vampires deified any entity other than Kain himself, some may have heard whispers from the invisible Elder God.

As the empire lay crumbling and falling apart towards the end, disputes concerning humans and their blood would turn frequent. As the supply of human "cattle" rapidly dwindled, blood would become an increasingly precious commodity, provoking frequent conflicts over sustenance. Turelim would thin Melchahim numbers, wary that the latter clan were depleting the human population too quickly.

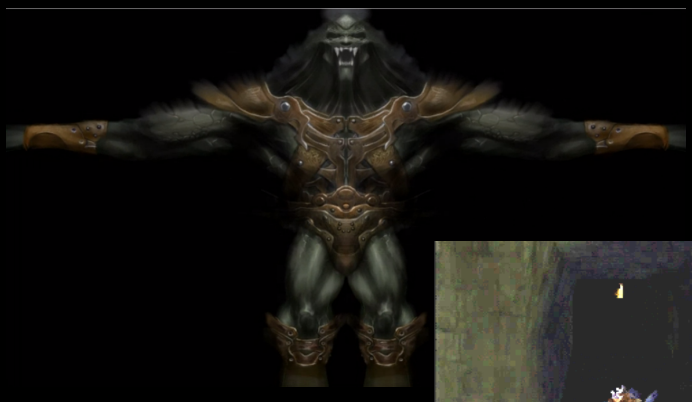
The Dumahim Clan

The “Ronin” – drifting, masterless samurai warriors – were evoked for the development codename of the Dumahim (aptly named given their style of clothing and mastership of weapon-smithing). While they are the most common type of vampire in Nosgoth, they are doomed to wander the land aimlessly, for their leader, Dumah, has been assassinated by the vampire hunters.

Before losing their senses to encroaching madness, they lived in the City of the Dumahim in the northern wastes. However, Dumah, in his arrogance, did not expect the human rebellion to stage an attack, and the place was set ablaze, burning fledglings and adults alike to ashes. Dumah himself was shackled and impaled to his own throne, a final mockery of his physical prowess. Nothing but ruin awaits Raziel when he finally visits these desolate ruins, with the exception of a few wraiths still haunting their confines.

The remaining survivors fled and spread throughout Nosgoth. Fledgling Dumahim sport dark green heads and sets of armour – their only defence now being their prehensile tongues, their insanity rendering them unable to effectively wield weapons. Their adult counterparts have bound their weapons to their arms in a desperate bid for lucidity, using these as bludgeons.

The original Dumahim design was much smaller, evolving through several iterations until Cabuco remade them into the armoured beasts we know.



Dumah

One of Raziel's closer brothers, the stoic and warlike Dumah boasted that his physical prowess was unmatched, even by Kain – until he was outmanoeuvred by the human hunters who stormed his city.

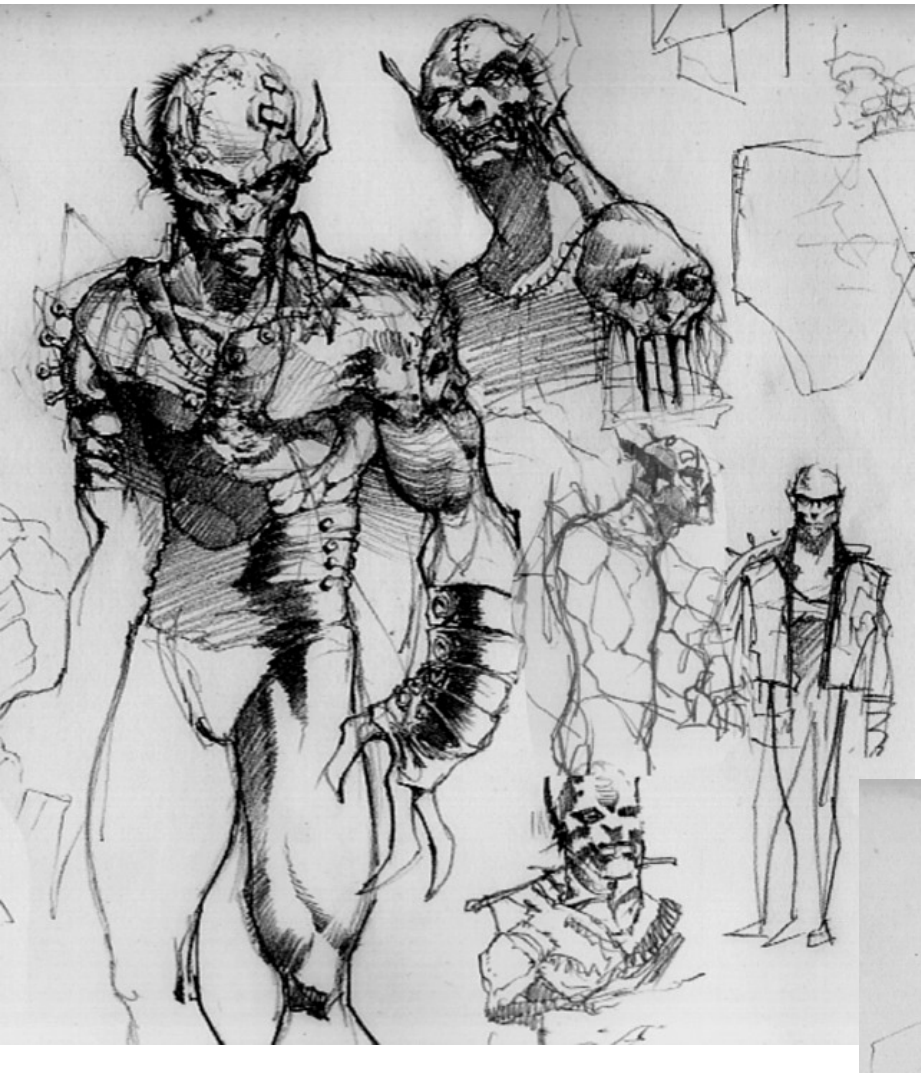
He wears imposing armour with a crow skull design on his chest, large metal pauldrons, and a helmet crowned with horns, perhaps to rival Kain's own physiology. The helm is bedecked with hanging drapes which invoke samurai motifs, with the designs on his armour reminiscent of the *kusari* mail worn by those Japanese warriors.

Unfortunately, no sketches of the Dumahim or Dumah himself were preserved (with the exception of the left) due to a hard drive failure.

The Melchahim Clan

Internally referred to as the “Skinners”, the Melchahim were considered the weakest of all six clans, their bodies inexorably rotting and falling apart. This putrefaction traced its roots back to their clan leader, Melchiah, being the last lieutenant raised by Kain, and thus inheriting the weakest portion of his gift.

Unlike other clans, the Melchahim are resigned to constant maintenance of their bodies, prizing fine skin and flesh to replace their own. They occupy the human-built Necropolis, which provides them with a large supply of corpses to raise and enlarge their army. According to Cabuco, they boasted the greatest number of soldiers in the empire, outmanning the Turelim three to one. Before their devolution into the shambling beings encountered in *Soul Reaver*, their roles included those of scientists, necromancers, and blood manipulators.



Adult Melchahim vampires possess disproportionate bodies with green, decaying flesh, in contrast to the younger, brown-skinned fledglings.

The Melchahim’s original designs

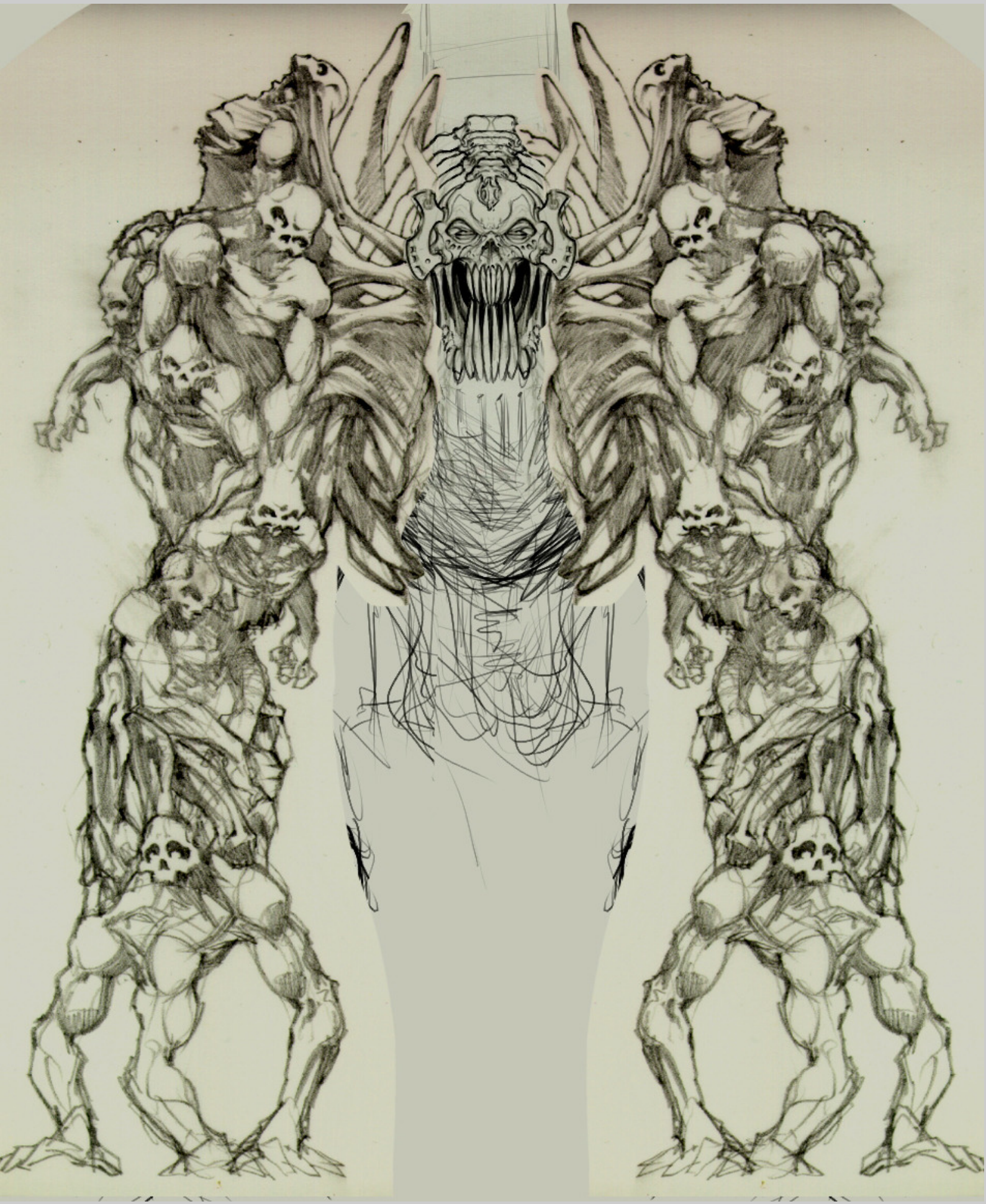
Melchiah

The most fragile of Raziel's brothers, Melchiah, was best described as cruel and methodical. His entire existence revolved around torturing and experimenting on his human victims. The corruption he inherited from Kain rendered his body frail, unable to stave off rapid decay. As a consequence, he was forced to continuously replace his skin, grafting others' hides onto his own. Cabuco described him as prone to outbursts of rage should anyone dare to question his methods or actions.

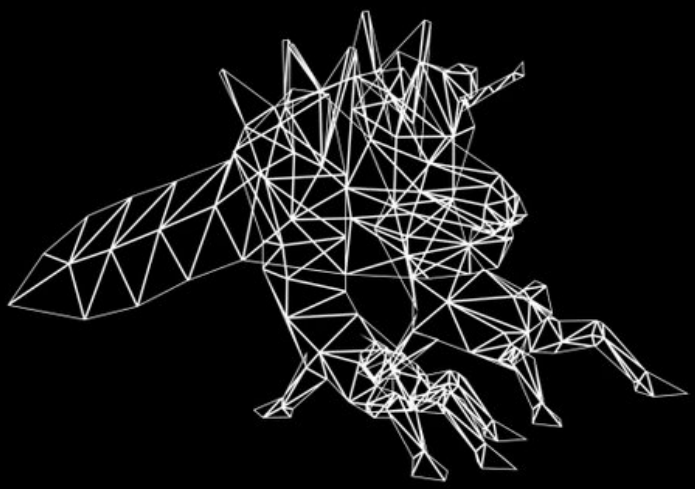
By the time Raziel discovers him, Melchiah has drastically devolved into a monstrous being, with human legs and arms serving as his fingertips and a gruesome mass of bodies forming his arms. His legs have atrophied, a fleshy tail assuming their place, forcing him to crawl around on two massive limbs. The top of his body is adorned with several bony spikes, his exposed spine protruding all down his back.

The surface of his flesh had a slimy consistency, haphazardly melded with the bones and skulls of his victims.

Melchiah sketch



Melchiah's body textures and wireframe



The Zephonim Clan

The Zephonim, codenamed “Wallcrawlers”, were an incredibly mobile vampire clan, fulfilling the roles of spies, alchemists, and assassins. Their limbs elongated over time, even evolving a third toe to bolster their climbing abilities. Adult Zephonim additionally developed wing-like appendages on their backs.

In *Soul Reaver*, the Zephonim are capable of climbing virtually any solid surface. They alternate between bipedal and quadrupedal movement, their stance dependent on their current disposition. When relaxed, they walk on two legs, frequently scanning their surroundings. When alerted, they exhibit a menacing posture, standing on all four limbs, ready to bite or raise their arms to viciously swipe at intruders.

Cabuco details the process of painting the Zephonim’s webbing textures:

> *“First I created the whole painting, with the background on a separate layer. Then I used a texture overlay for the skin, and a separate one for the background. I adjusted opacity and laid it out over the skin, then used a simple layer mask to paint out what I didn't want to have the texture. The texture was an abstract form of cobwebbing that reveals the spiderlike nature of Zephon. The same is true with the background, but I didn't want it to be the same as his face or it would look a little too cut and paste. If this had been Rahab, I would have put in something reminiscent of eel or fish skin.”* — Daniel Cabuco

Few sketches of *Soul Reaver*’s adult vampires have been archived, but Cabuco produced new artwork of this adult Zephonim, poised to strike at its next victim, for his “Sanctuary of Kain” Patreon page.

The Zephonim’s early design

Zephon

Zephon’s anatomy, much like Melchiah’s, devolved monstrously, unable (and perhaps unwilling) to conserve his original humanoid form. Sacrificing his clan’s signature mobility, he wove his body to his throne room in the spire of the Silenced Cathedral, ultimately becoming one with it.

This results in an *Alien* Queen-esque appearance, with scissor-sharp enlarged claws, fleshy tubes stretching from his back which affix him to the walls, and a sac for laying sterile eggs. His abdomen, and four, elongated legs, dangle from the ceiling, and a retractable membrane at the chamber entrance is capable of fully sealing any prey within his lair, ensuring nothing can escape Zephon's reach.

“Zephon was scheming and suspicious, always sending spies out and seeking information to exploit a weakness. He preferred the art of the ambush, attacking indirectly. He saw the value in planning for the future, and had the greatest stock of blood in storage, sometimes using it to barter.“ — Daniel Cabuco

Zephon preferred the Cathedral as a vantage to observe all that transpired in Nosgoth via his web of spies, pitting all sides against each other from the safety of his lofty fortress. All Raziel’s brethren were jealous of him, but only Zephon matched Raziel's manipulativeness.

Much like his offspring, Zephon too has developed grotesque wing-like appendages on his back. Another distinctive characteristic is his face’s capacity to split into several elongated segments – he can freely stretch his eyes, and bares a row of long, sharp teeth. His torso is partially transparent and akin to an exoskeleton, with muscle tissue visibly pulsating underneath.

THE EGG MECHANIC:
WELL WE WENT THRU A LOT OF IDEAS WITH THE ZEPHON BATTLE. ONE WAS THAT THERE WOULD BE A SMALL GROUP OF HUMAN HUNTERS WHO MADE IT THERE (YOU CAN SEE THE FLAME THROWER OF ONE THAT WAS LEFT BEHIND). IF ZEPHON GRABBED ONE AND 'INGESTED' HIM, HIS NEXT EGG WOULD HOLD A FLEDGLING ZEPHONIM.
BUT THE STRESS ON THE PS1 AND THE PLAYER WOULD HAVE BEEN TOO MUCH (AI AND PLAYER FRUSTRATION WOULD BE TOO HIGH) SO WE NIXXED ALL THE HUMANS AND LEFT THE EXPLODING EGGS AS OUR PRIMARY MECHANIC.
- DANIEL CABUCO

Zephon's early design

The Rahabim Clan

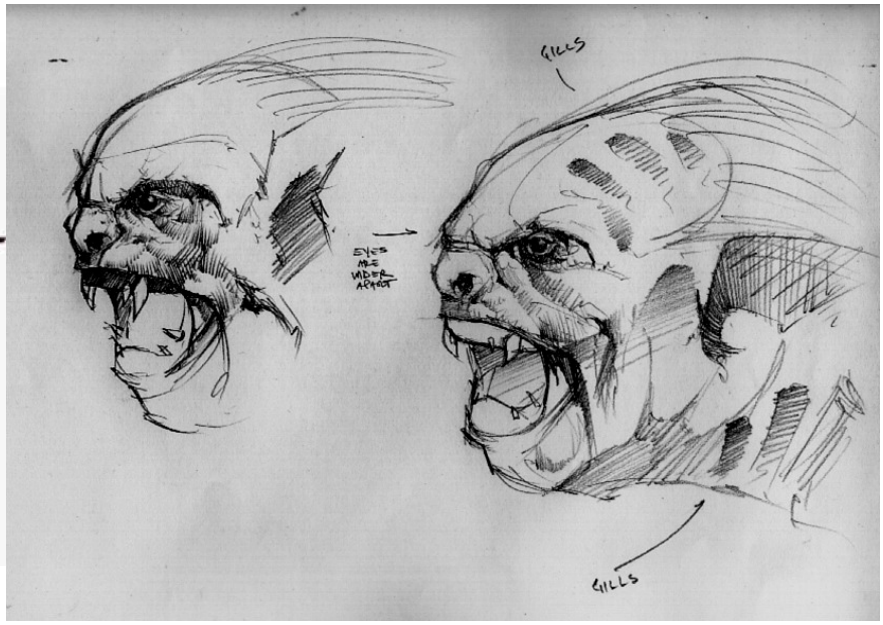
The amphibious Rahabim, codenamed the “Aluka” in development, are equally dangerous on land and in sea. This clan – their leader, Rahab, dubbed “maladjusted” by Raziel – is particularly sensitive to sunlight, a trait which prompted them to retreat into Nosgoth’s waters, transcending their race’s fatal weakness to that element.

This transformation was not a painless or trivial endeavour, however. Cabuco clarifies how in order to gain true immunity, the Rahabim subjected themselves to non-lethal contact with water, gradually adapting while their flesh burnt by drinking blood to rapidly recover. Once immunity was achieved, Rahab and his descendants were empowered to seek permanent refuge from the sun. The Elder God outlines this history to Raziel upon discovering the Drowned Abbey:

“Your brother Rahab and his brood, devastated even by the feeble rays of Nosgoth’s sun, overcame their vulnerability to water and retreated from the surface. Now they haunt these ruins, and glide in the darkness of its stagnant depths.” — The Elder God, *Soul Reaver*

The Rahabim developed natural combative talents too, perhaps not dissimilar to those of archer-fish – capable of spitting high-velocity water to shoot down insects beyond their reach. As opposed to the telekinetic projectiles emitted by their larger Turelim brethren, the substance produced and fired by the Rahabim is best described as a “foul water bubble”. In melee, the Rahabim overwhelm their prey with flurries of bite attacks. Their jaws, lined with many sharp teeth, serve them well as they scour for prey in the murky rivers and seas of Nosgoth.

Rahabim adult



Rahabim fledgling

A fledgling Rahabim on a hunt

Rahab

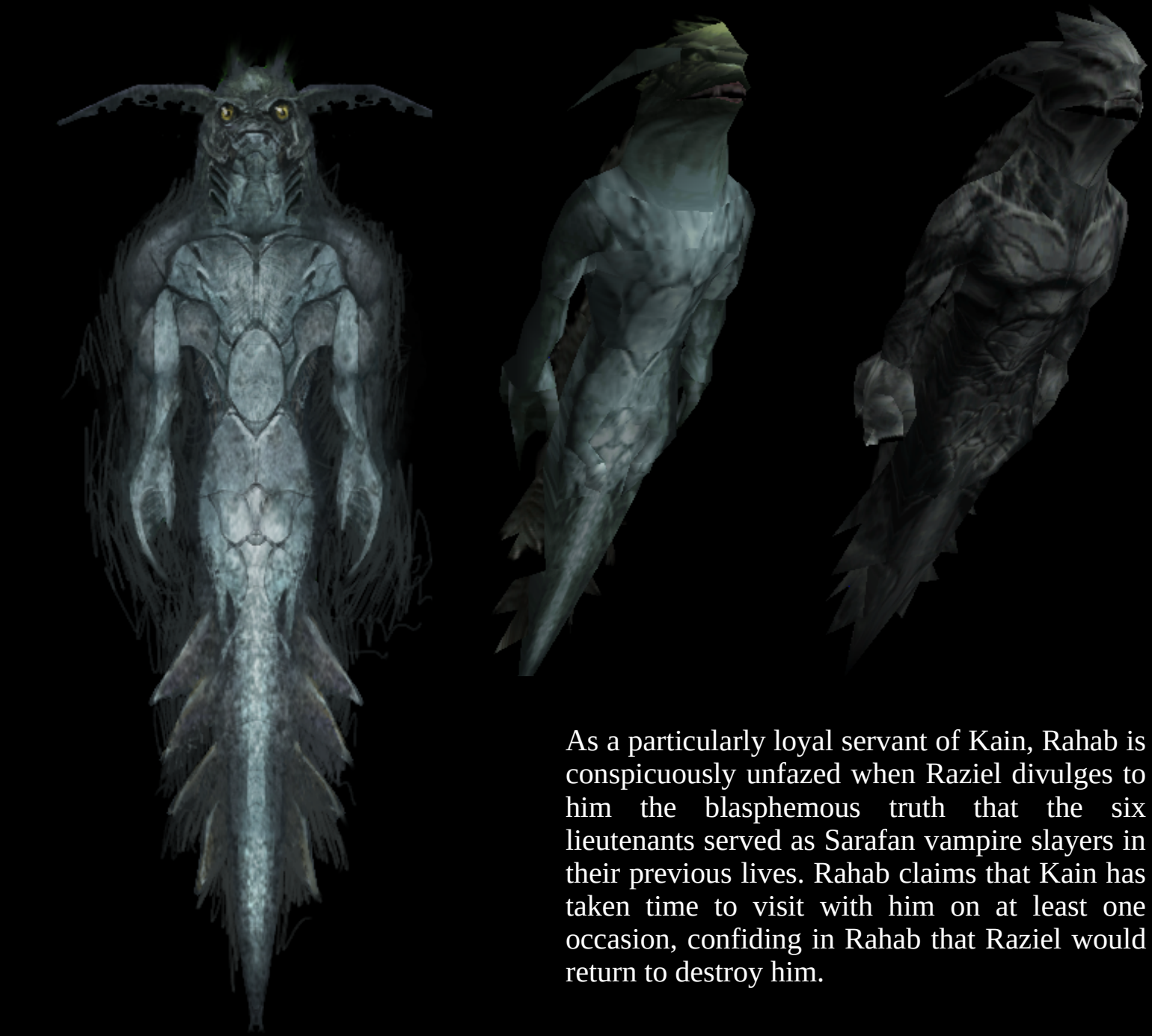
“You, of all of us, should respect the power bestowed by a limitation overcome.” — Rahab, *Soul Reaver*

Considered the undisputed King of the Sea, Rahab was the first vampire in Nosgoth’s history to overcome his race’s inherent vulnerability to water.

Rahab and his progeny underwent a profound transformation, developing gills and aquatic features which compensated for their extreme sensitivity to Nosgoth's sun. They are the only vampires known to have surpassed this weakness, but in contrast to other clans, even adult Rahabim burn to death upon exposure to sunlight, like their fledgling brethren.

“Rahabim would have been trying to overcome their weakness to water by trying to improve the time they could spend in contact with it. Perhaps drinking blood at the same time the water burned them so their systems could heal and slowly, painfully adapt.“ — Daniel Cabuco

Rahab's facial features underwent some modification throughout development – shifting from a catfish-like countenance to one better resembling that of a shark or eel. His colours were also altered from a marine green to more muted greys and blues. While the lower portion of his body did not significantly change across these iterations, he did gain more muscular definition on his chest.



As a particularly loyal servant of Kain, Rahab is conspicuously unfazed when Raziel divulges to him the blasphemous truth that the six lieutenants served as Sarafan vampire slayers in their previous lives. Rahab claims that Kain has taken time to visit with him on at least one occasion, confiding in Rahab that Raziel would return to destroy him.

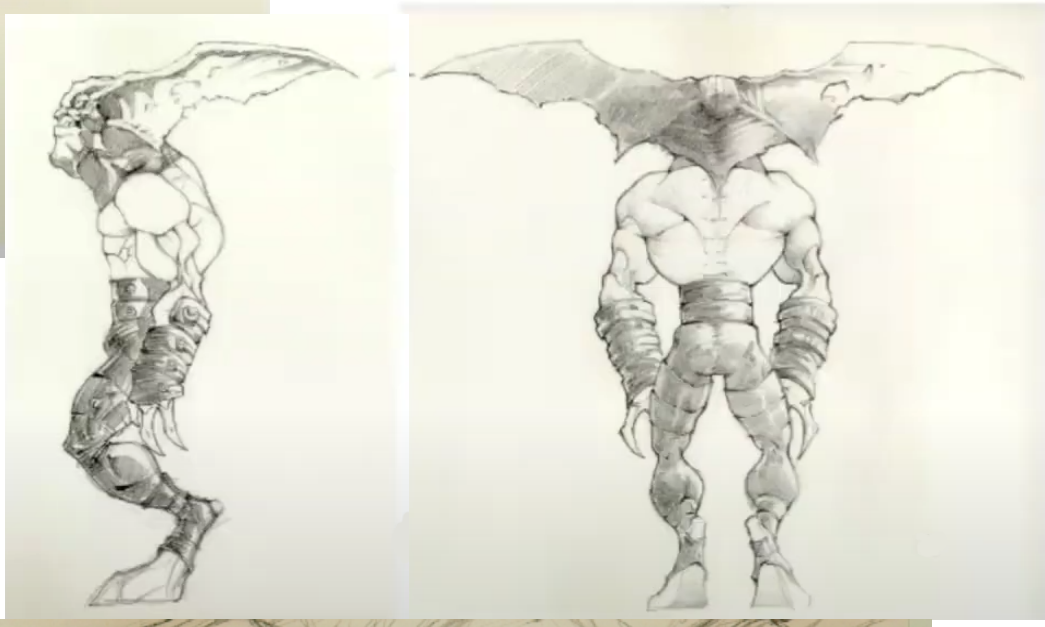
The Turelim Clan

While their clan territory, the Smokestack, was infamously removed from the game, the Turelim still appear in the retail release, sighted guarding other areas instead (specifically, the Lighthouse and the depths of the Oracle's Cave). These large, hulking beasts with goat-like legs are the largest and most powerful vampiric predators in Nosgoth. Though near-sighted, they employ their acute sense of hearing, in tandem with the ability to shoot telekinetic force projectiles, to locate and strike down prey from a distance.

To left:
Raziel would encounter pupating Turelim "eggs" in the Smokestack area, and sneak past them to activate a wheel to raise the water level. They could alternatively be burnt with sunlight.

To right:
This concept art of a Turelim is utilised in only one place in the entire game – as a texture for the endlessly-spinning vortex observed in the first chamber of the Underworld. We would be screaming too!

Various Turelim studies from different angles



Adult and fledgling final model textures

Turel (Unused)

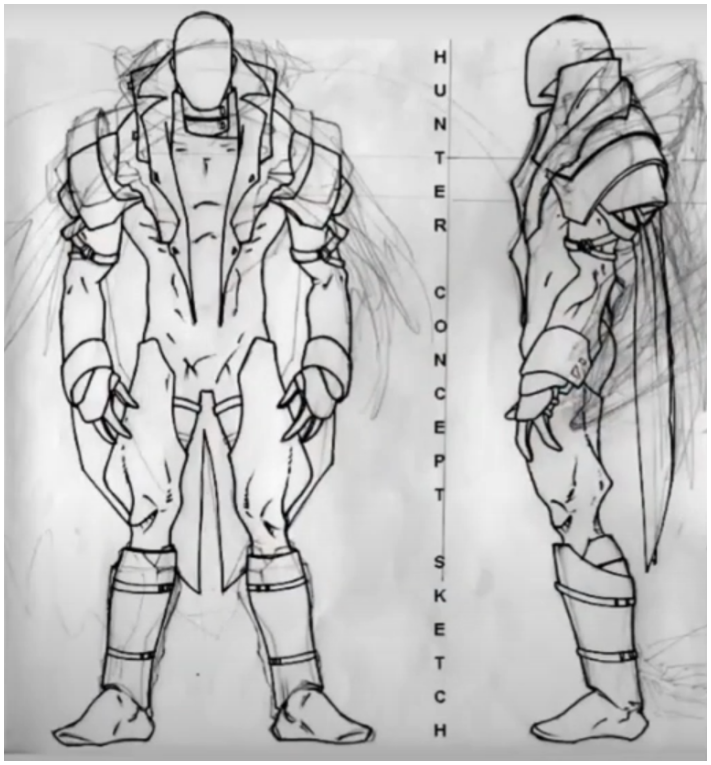
After Raziel's execution, Turel effectively replaced his disgraced brother as Kain’s second-in-command. He and his clan territory, the Smokestack, were unfortunately cut due to time constraints. Turel was to be fought roughly halfway through this domain, with Raziel stumbling upon an audience chamber. Turel would ambush him from behind, obstructing Raziel’s advance. Raziel would lure him into destroying a series of pillars supporting an adjacent cistern which he had previously filled with water, causing the ceiling to crack and the room to flood, burning Turel to death.

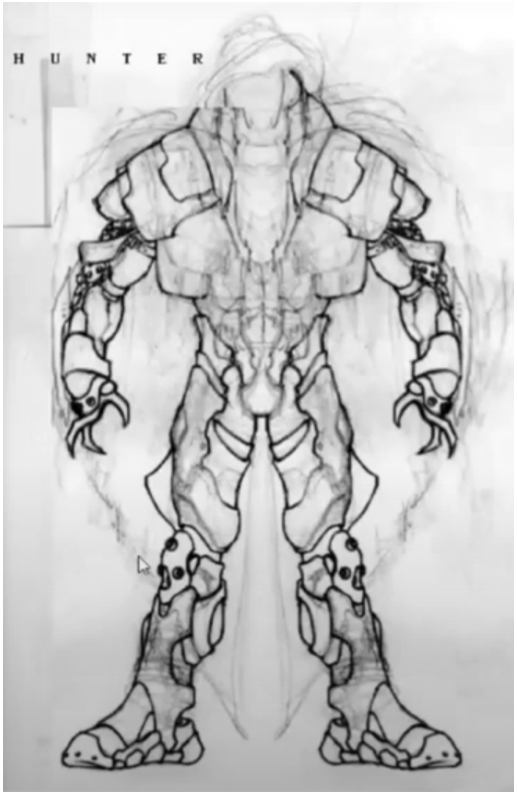
Over the centuries, Turel’s sight diminished to the point of blindness. His ear cartilage transformed into an antenna-like system, capable of echolocation to enable him to navigate. Like his brother, Dumah, he remained bipedal, but in contrast to Dumah’s reliance on armour, Turel's peeled-back skin merged with bone to form his own organic exoskeletal aegis, similar to Kain’s. The remainder of his body was malformed over hundreds of years of devolution, with monstrous mandibles on both sides of his face.

Vampire Hunters – Male

These hunters protect the citizens of the Human Citadel, but sometimes venture beyond the City's walls to hunt vampires.

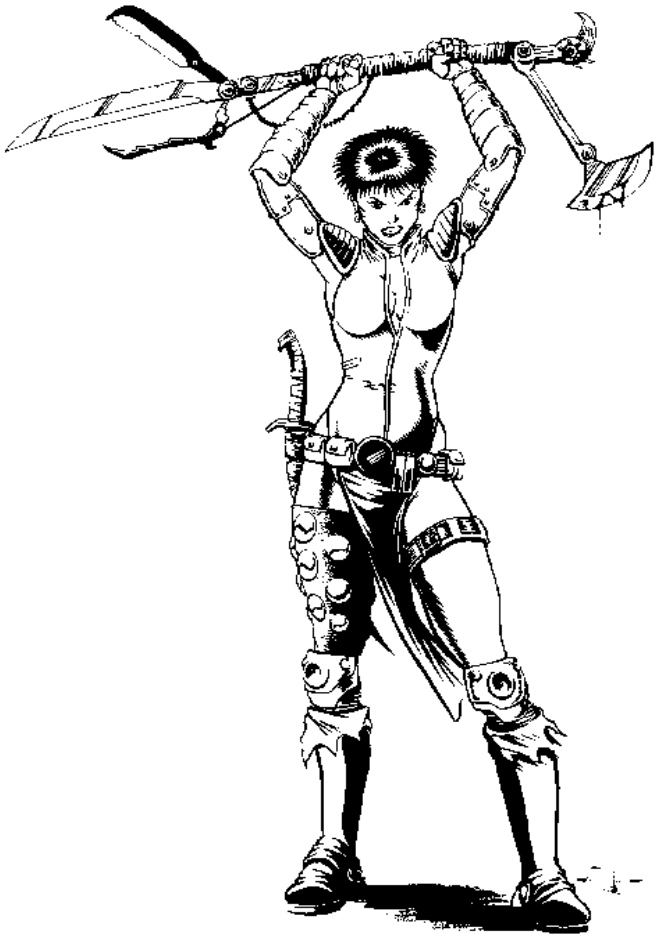
Raziel encounters close-ranged, flamethrower-wielding hunters, alongside others armed with crossbows. The two classes appear to have elements of steampunk in their clothing. Below are work-in-progress sketches, with the final designs in the lower-right corner.





Vampire Hunters – Female (Unused)

Little is known about them; only these sketches exist.



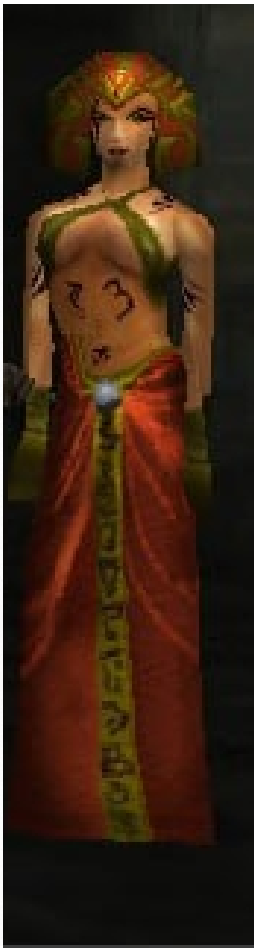
Vampire Worshippers

Unlike the vampire hunters, these humans have adapted to serve their vampire masters instead by worshipping them as gods. There are two variants of worshippers: adepts, who use their sacrificial knives as weapons, and novitiates, who wield beautiful but deadly staves. Both classes wear ceremonial robes and masks to keep their true identities hidden if discovered.

They are considered an insidious threat to the population of the Human Citadel, kidnapping their victims at night and conveying them to their temple to use as blood sacrifices. In the release version, the vampire worshippers' Undercity lair was cut from the game, so they were moved to the Silenced Cathedral instead.

The Priestess (Unused)

The High Priestess was the leader of the Vampire Worshippers, residing in a temple at the periphery of the Human Citadel. She wore a red skirt with symbols, tattoos of the various clan insignias emblazoned over her torso. Her design differed in Top Cow's *Soul Reaver* comic, dressed in grey robes with a long hood. Her gift was the ability to possess others.



The boss encounter with the Priestess would have taken place in a gladiatorial pit, which she overlooked from a high ledge. When Raziel entered, the gate behind him would close as she set her possessed vampire and human servants against him, driving them berserk with her sorcery. Only once Raziel dispatched them would he be able to ascend and pursue her. She would attempt to flee, but would fail to open the exit door, with Raziel cornering her to deliver the final blow.

EVEN THE HIGH PRIESTESS OF THE VAMPIRE WORSHIPPERS WILL FALL BEFORE YOU.
HER SORCEROUS POSSESSION OF OTHERS WILL NOT SAVE HER FROM YOUR WRATH.
THE BELLS OF THE SILENCED CATHEDRAL WILL RING OUT ACROSS THE LAND ONCE AGAIN.
THE FUTURE IS BEFORE YOU, RAZIEL.

Sluagh

The Sluagh were creatures native to the Spectral Realm of Nosgoth, preying upon lost souls. Their distinctive features included large eyes, sharp teeth, and black hair. Though the Sluagh were influenced by the Morlocks from H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine*, the "Morlock" codename was applied to the Turelim vampires instead.

The Sluagh exhibit pack-like behaviour – not unlike our real-world hyenas. Brazen in groups, they will flee if cornered alone. In *Soul Reaver 2*, their design becomes more animalistic, slightly modified with nostrils and a less apparent belly.

The Sluagh description given to artists was 'swollen rictus of teeth, unkempt hair and large, lamp like eyes.'

Vampire Wraiths

For the wraiths, it is best to leave Cabuco to explain how the design came about:

“The Vampire Wraiths are a funny story. Amy had given me the description for them one day and as I had just finished work on the Sluagh. I kept churning over in my head what those fettered souls would look like. I wanted to do something super detailed, but the PS1 level graphics were pretty limited. I was pouring through all my art books to get inspiration and get into the groove. I think I went through just about everything I had at the time, from Gundam to Dark Crystal. I have a belief that when you put good things in your head, great stuff comes out. I went to bed exhausted and just let it all sink in. I woke up at 4 in the morning, unable to sleep further.. something was rattling around in my noggin'.

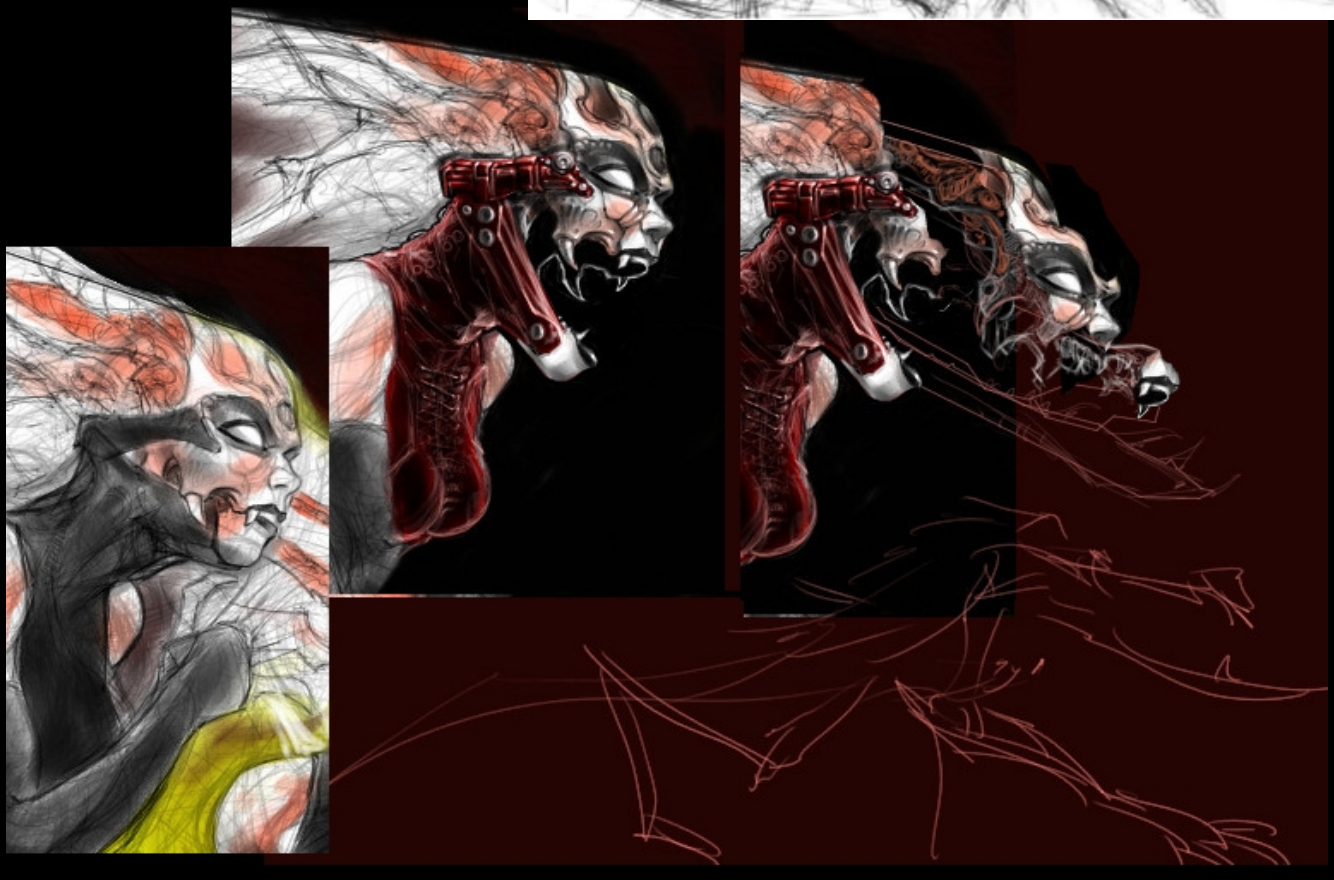
At the time I lived a few blocks from Crystal D, so I got dressed and sort of jogged to work. I got into my drawing table and just started drawing cool shapes. I realized that, actually, the less I showed of them, the better they would look, so I grabbed my book of mummified bodies and started riffing on the design from there. (yes, I have a book of mummified bodies.. doesn't everyone?!) Looking at death shrouds and wrappings, I then grabbed my old Frazetta book and looked up Death Dealer. Then that led me to look at Alan Lee's paintings of Nazgul. Before I knew it I had knocked out the design by 8 am and had turnarounds done by 9:30 when most people started coming in.

I showed my design to the programmers, and was happy that I could come up with a design that didn't require a ton of bones for the legs. (I felt like I had used my creativity to come up with a good design that not only looked good but solved a bone count issue with some of our enemies) Hoo that became a long story, lol.”

Kain's Brides (Unused)

Little is known of these prototypical vampires, bar that that they would likely have been part of the Zephonim clan. They were cut relatively early in development, and only these drawings remain of them.

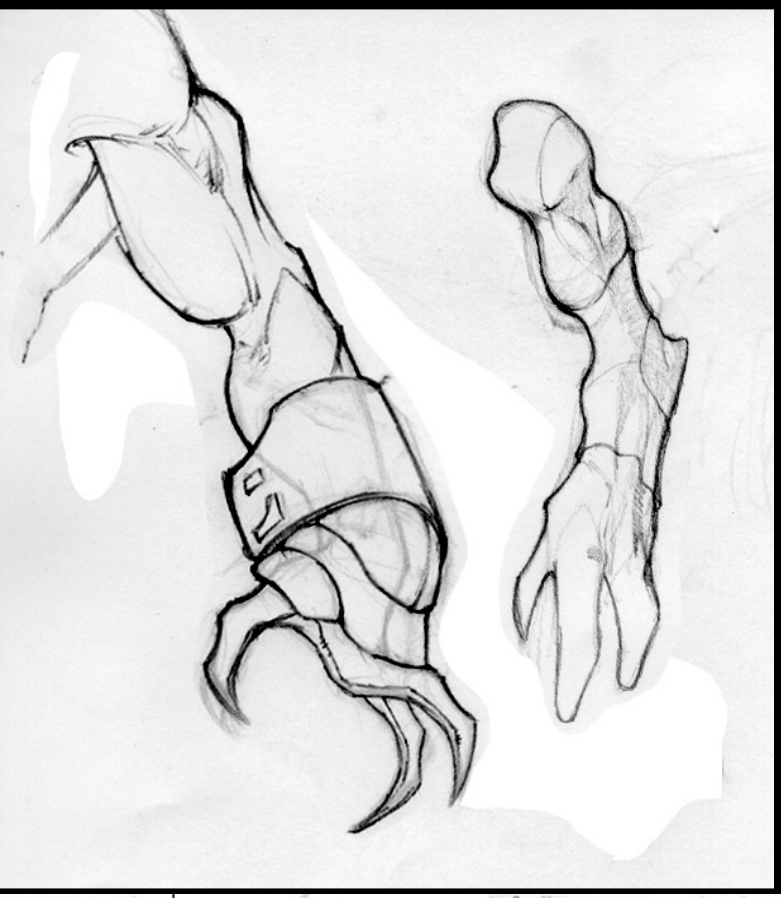
Raziel would probably have fought them on his way to the Sanctuary of the Clans (likely in the pool room). Their faces were capable of splitting open into segments, much like Zephon's.

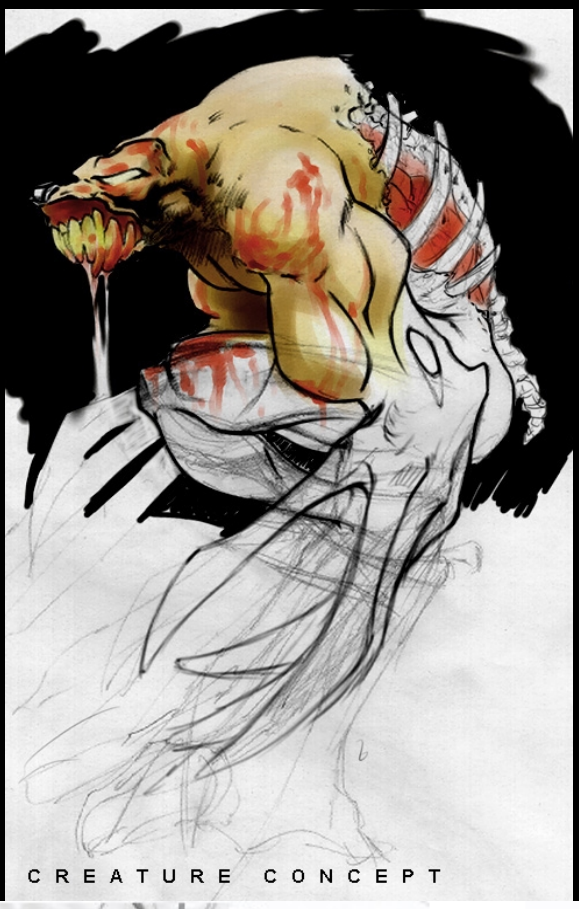


Forsaken (Unused)

The true nature of the Forsaken is ambiguous, but they appeared to be some sort of faction of outcasts.

Creature Concepts





CREATURE CONCEPT

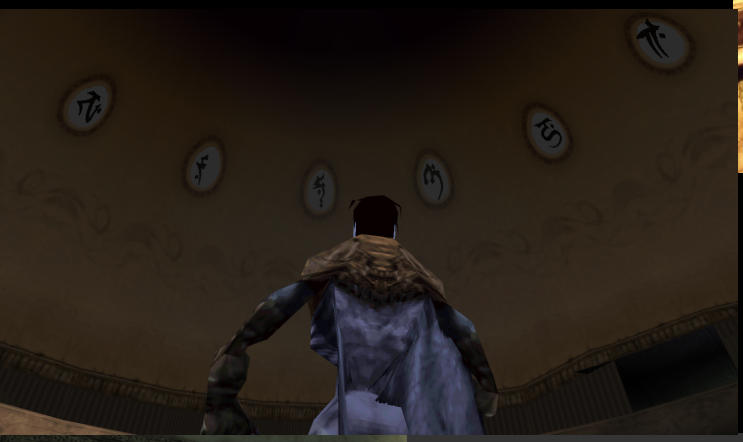
CREATURE CONCEPT

CREATURE CONCEPT

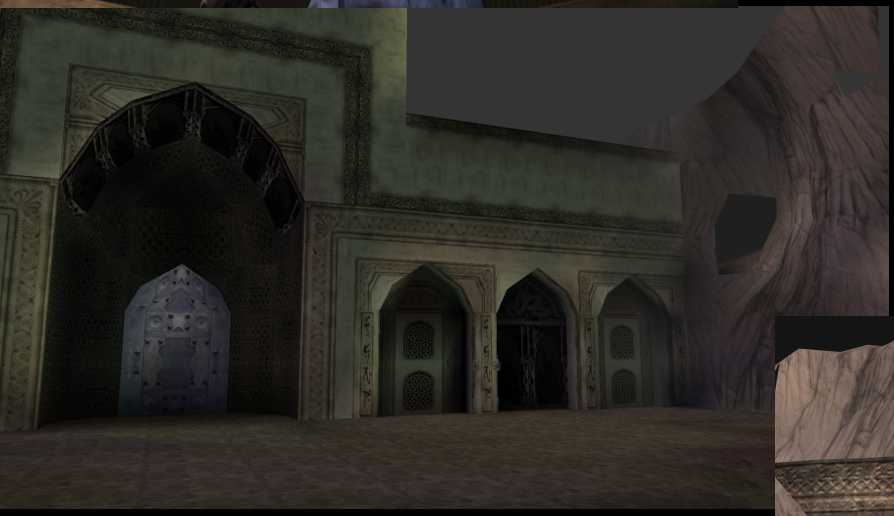
Chapter 4:
Environments

The Sanctuary of the Clans

The Sanctuary was featured in the opening sequence, but in game its scale was much reduced. The dais in the centre featured the same symbols as seen in *Blood Omen*. The area's only known concept art is on page 71.



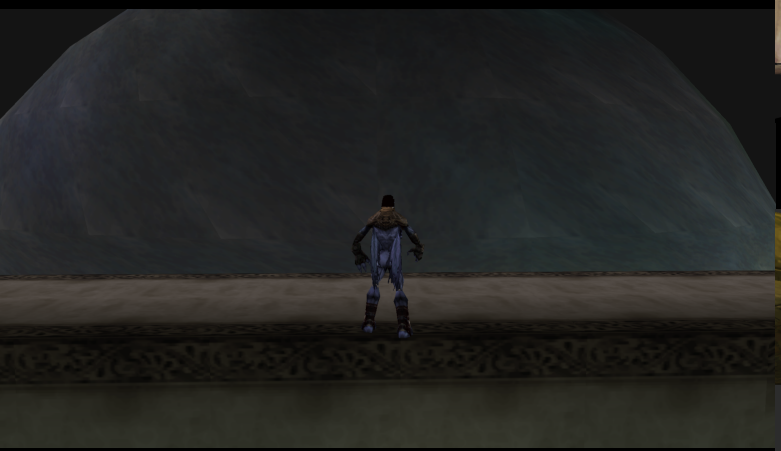
Left: The throne room was intended to incorporate windows, much like those present in the FMV sequence, but these were ultimately omitted.



Left: Originally, the Sanctuary did not feature a passable grate to the right. Instead, Raziel would need to scale the damaged wall on the right and enter via a rock opening. The façade also underwent changes.

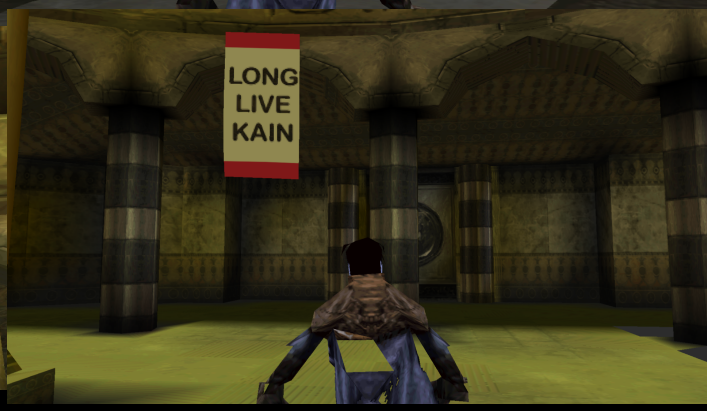
Right: The mountain pass which Raziel would use to make his way inside

Left: The dome was removed before release



Right: Originally, the Pillars each had individual symbols, but these were simplified due to memory limitations (see page 111).

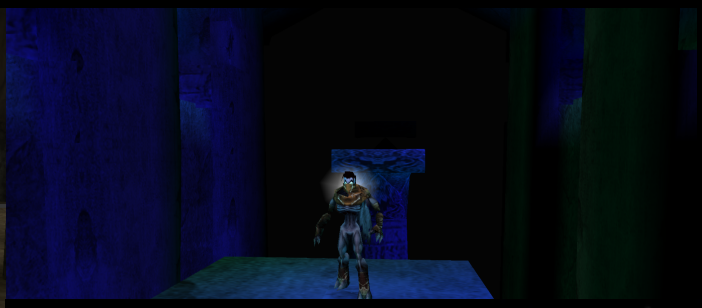
Left: The entrance to the Sunlight Glyph area was originally positioned within the training room featuring the Dumahim (just before the Sanctuary), who also inhabited that area. It was later moved next to the Silenced Cathedral, with the Dumahim replaced by Turelim.



Above: A scalable wall was required to access the Sanctuary

Above: Placeholder banners

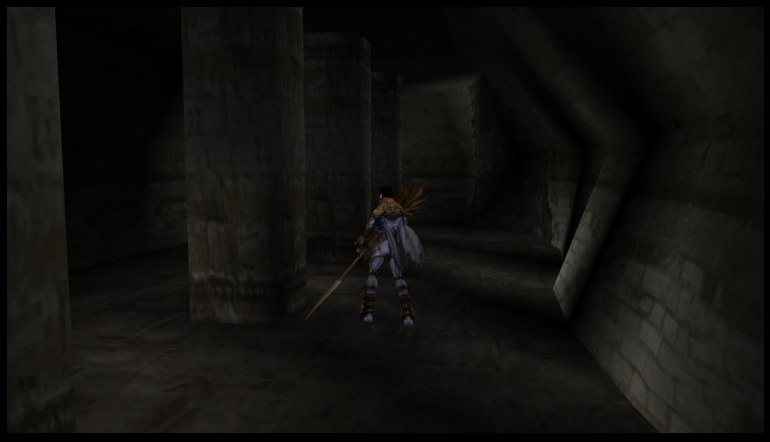
Below: The Sound Glyph area was originally situated at the rear, and required Shift-at-Will



Left: The original Sound Glyph stained glass mural

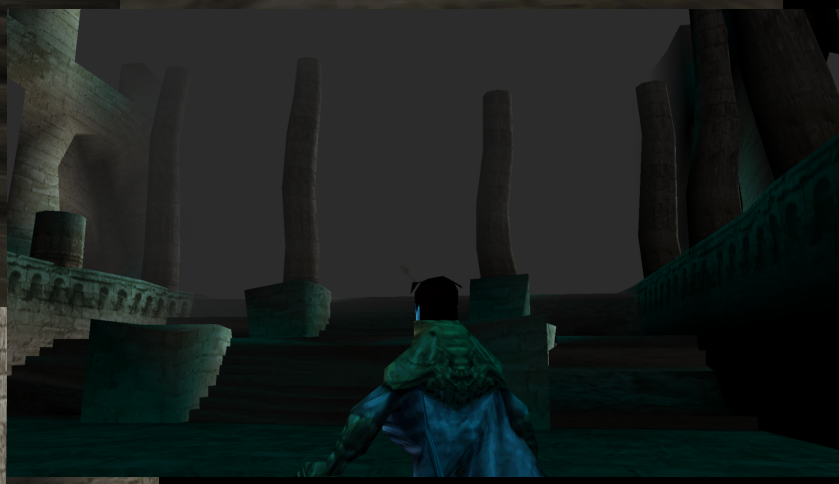
Raziel's Stronghold

After Raziel's execution, the Dumahim clan took over this fortress. Raziel discovers it in ruins, with no trace of his clan left. It was built out of a distinct white brick which became stained and tarnished over the centuries. This clan territory was affiliated with fire, with both the Fire Forge and Fire Glyph once intended to be discovered here.



Left: The overall detail of this level was higher in its early stages.

Right and below: Raziel could originally discover the severed head and hands of one of his own statues.



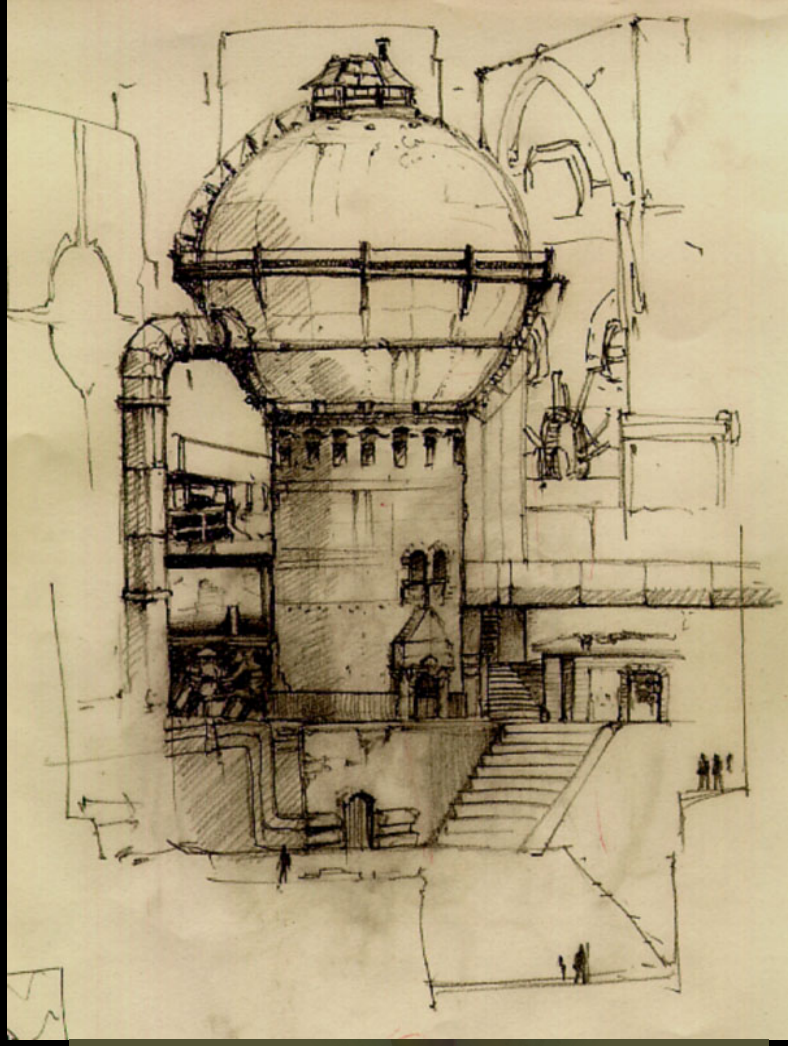
Left: A great deal more debris was originally found strewn throughout the level.

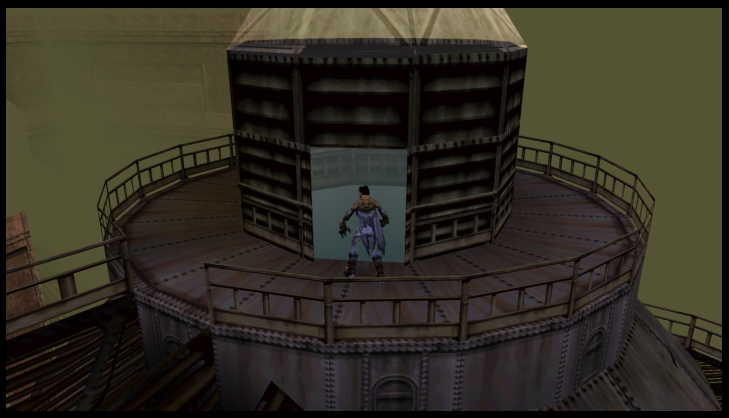
Right: The Fire Forge was originally accessed via the drawbridge tower in this territory before being relocated to the Drowned Abbey.

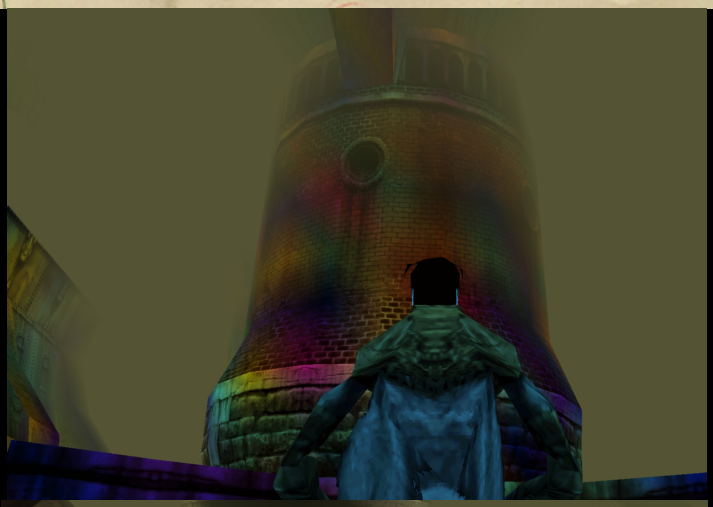
The Human Citadel

This last bastion of humankind, also referred to as the City, originally played a much larger role in the story. Raziel would uncover vampire worshippers nocturnally congregating at the city outskirts. The Citadel's layout was broadly consistent throughout development, and while more elaborate upper ledges were planned to be utilised in the Water Tower area, the largest cuts entailed the removal of tunnels leading to the removed Undercity section, with a new water reservoir now leading to a health power-up in rooms moved and repurposed from the Spirit Glyph Altar.

The Citadel also hosted the Spirit Forge during production, prior to the Spirit Reaver's removal from the game.



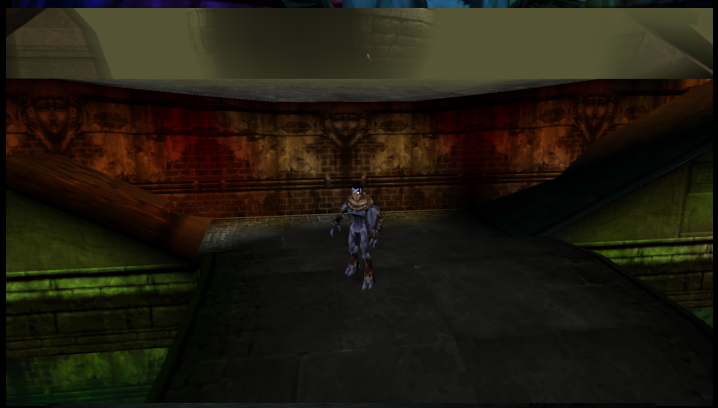




Above: There was another entrance to the Water Tower at its zenith, shown via a cutscene.

Right: The lighting was originally a lot more pronounced in this area.

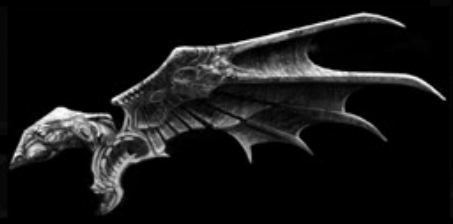
Below: This vantage point allowed humans to spot potential threats from the Lake of the Dead.



Above, Le Départ de 1792

The Water Glyph Altar, despite its location in the sewer system, is floridly decorated. The murals encountered there are of French origin, most sourced from reliefs found on the Arc de Triomphe. The fish frieze from the Chanin building also features in the canals nearby the Glyph Altar area.

The Water Glyph statue was dubbed “astat” in the game data, and bears unique armour.



Above & left: Originally, the Spectral Realm was markedly more colourful and twisted. Its earlier direction is well illustrated in this area.

The Necropolis

The Necropolis originally exuded much darker and moodier atmospheric lighting, particularly within its crypts and undercrofts. This direction may have been deemed too dark for player usability, with the final version employing brighter lighting. The location underwent quite extensive retexturing work between game builds (see below for early screenshots).

Bottom left: This mural is known as the Externsteine relief. In the final version, Melchiah has etched an effigy of himself over it (see top right).

The Silenced Cathedral

The Cathedral was at first even more elaborate than its retail incarnation, accommodating Raziel's original final quest to unblock its sounding pipes (blocked by flammable webbing) and thus destroy the last vestiges of Nosgoth's vampire population.

HD mural reconstruction

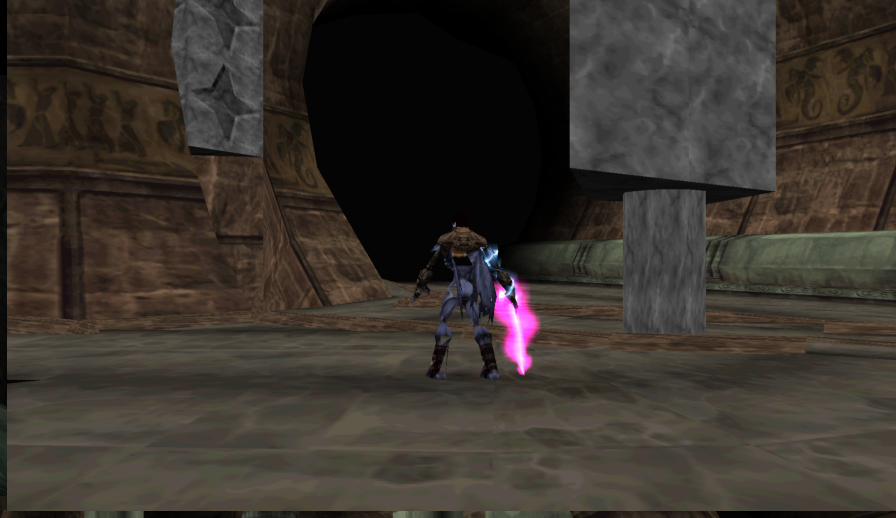
It features art and paintings inspired by the Maya, adorning many of its walls. The Cathedral's midsection once contained two fully open passages, but only the left of these remans in the retail version. The Sound Glyph was not originally placed in its bowels, with Raziel instead discovering the Sound Forge in its upper tiers.

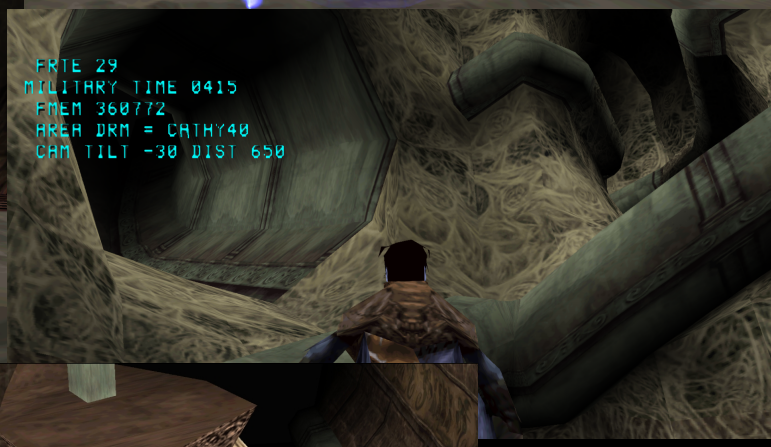
Left: Maya inspired carvings found in the midsection

Below: This mural was based upon Mayan Bonampak paintings

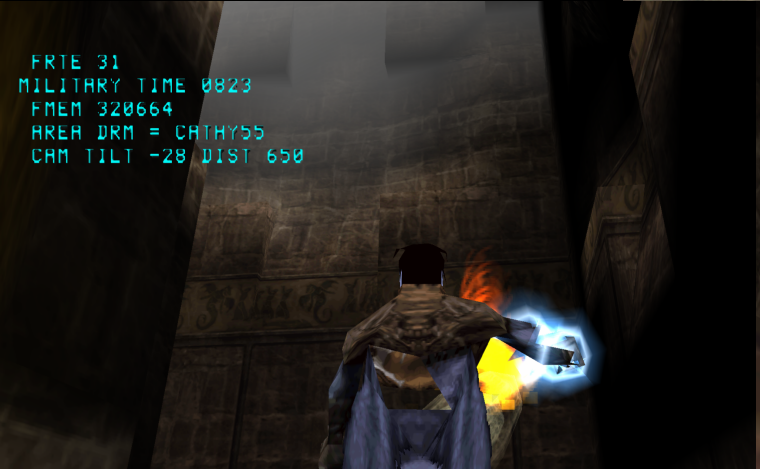
HD mural reconstruction

Below: Early Cathedral screenshots





Left: An unknown container, potentially for holding an upgrade



Zephon's Lair

This boss room originally connected to a wider range of tunnels, but time constraints, feedback, and other limitations resulted in a simplified final layout. Initially, Zephon was set to guard a secret tunnel which would lead Raziel to the pinnacle of the Silenced Cathedral.

In early designs of the boss encounter, Raziel would utilise two chambers adjacent to the main lair to ignite Zephon's eggs. This more convoluted methodology to destroying Zephon was streamlined as tester feedback proved entirely negative, according to Cabuco.

Nupraptor's Retreat

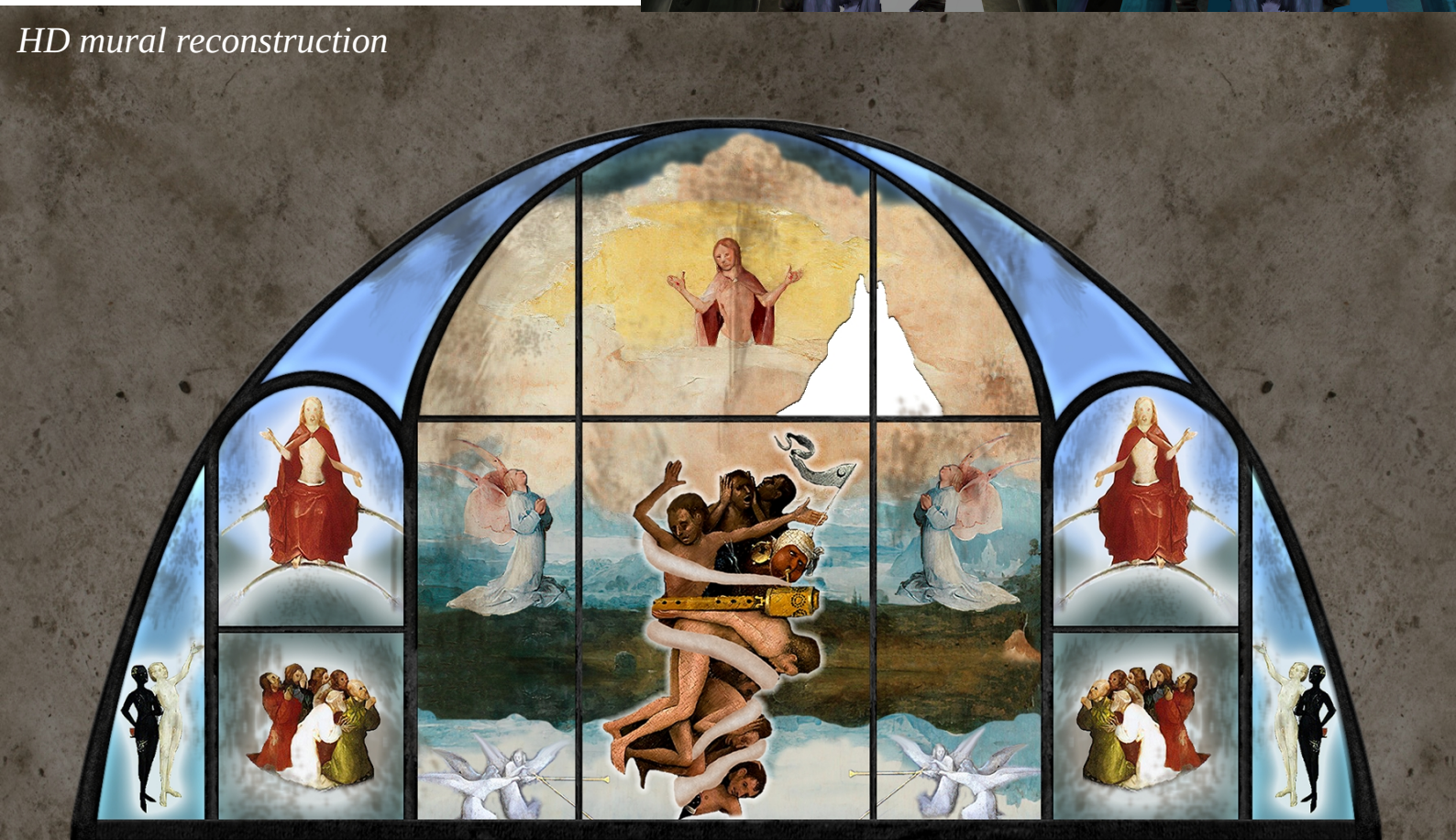
Another nod to *Blood Omen*, the Retreat's waterfall has long since dried up, and the upper portion of the clifftop skull has fallen into the valley below. Raziel traverses areas of the old fortress in order to reach the Stone Glyph Altar, secreted across the valley in the mountains.

The skull's jaw concealed a curious religious-themed mural above. It pastiches several of Hieronymus Bosch's paintings, particularly the three triptychs: *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, *The Last Judgment*, and *The Hay Wain*. *The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things* was also referenced.

The Garden of Earthly Delights by Hieronymus Bosch

Bosch was a Dutch painter, most famous for such triptychs. The developers did not replicate these in full, instead opting to cut out and adapt particular figures from these scenes to construct a brand new mural for the game. See if you can match up all of the individual elements in these paintings!

HD mural reconstruction

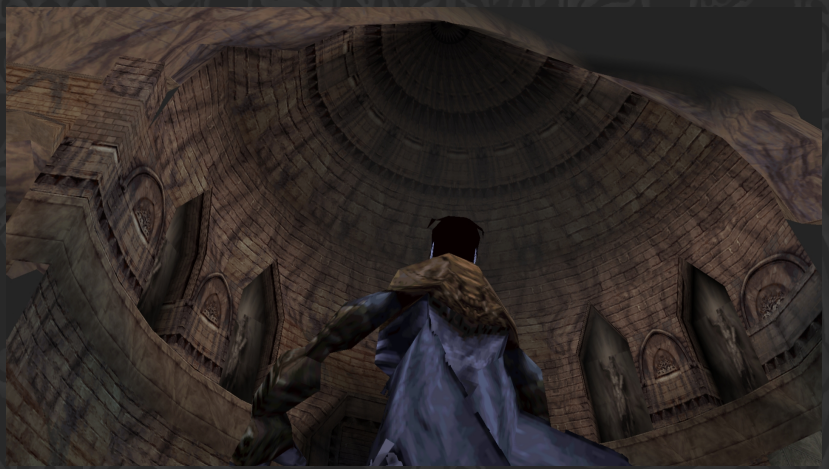


The Tomb of the Sarafan

The final resting place of the Sarafan – until Kain saw fit to disturb their eternal slumber. By the time Raziel finds the tomb centuries later, its outer dome has collapsed, leaving the entrance protected only by a set of gates, its secrets laid bare for all to see. In prototypes, the sarcophagi were set with lids in place, but in the retail version, they are open, their lids out of position.

The inner chapel housed stained glass murals memorialising Vorador's demise and the martyred Balance Guardian from *Blood Omen*. Cabuco drew a set of spectral textures for these murals which went unused due to memory constraints.

"Personally, I think it would be cool if Kain could 'see' into the Spectral realm and get clues from it. With today's technology it would be totally possible to have textures morph in realtime around Kain. (like Bioshock Infinite*) I always felt that Spectral wasn't an evil place, but it recorded Trauma from events (which is why I had children's hand prints and skeletons on the stained glass on* SR1*)."* — Daniel Cabuco



The outer façade was later changed to use textures from the Smokestack

In order to authentically remake the Sarafan tombstones in HD, it was necessary to track down all elements used to construct each one. Most matches were discovered in the famous French Père Lachaise Cemetery. However, several of these statues are also found in Notre-Dame Cathedral, such as the weeping angel below. Note that the lower midsection of the coffins remains untextured in the final game.

Raziel's tombstone features the weeping angel.

Turel's tombstone features the praying boy statue, Little Samuel, by Luigi Pampaloni.

Dumah's tombstone has been decorated with a modified angel from the Arc de Triomphe, with the trumpet removed.

Rahab's tombstone has been decorated with a statue from the grave of Lahovary, found in Père Lachaise Cemetery.

Zephon's tombstone has most likely been decorated with a depiction of the blind Justice, but no original source has yet been found.

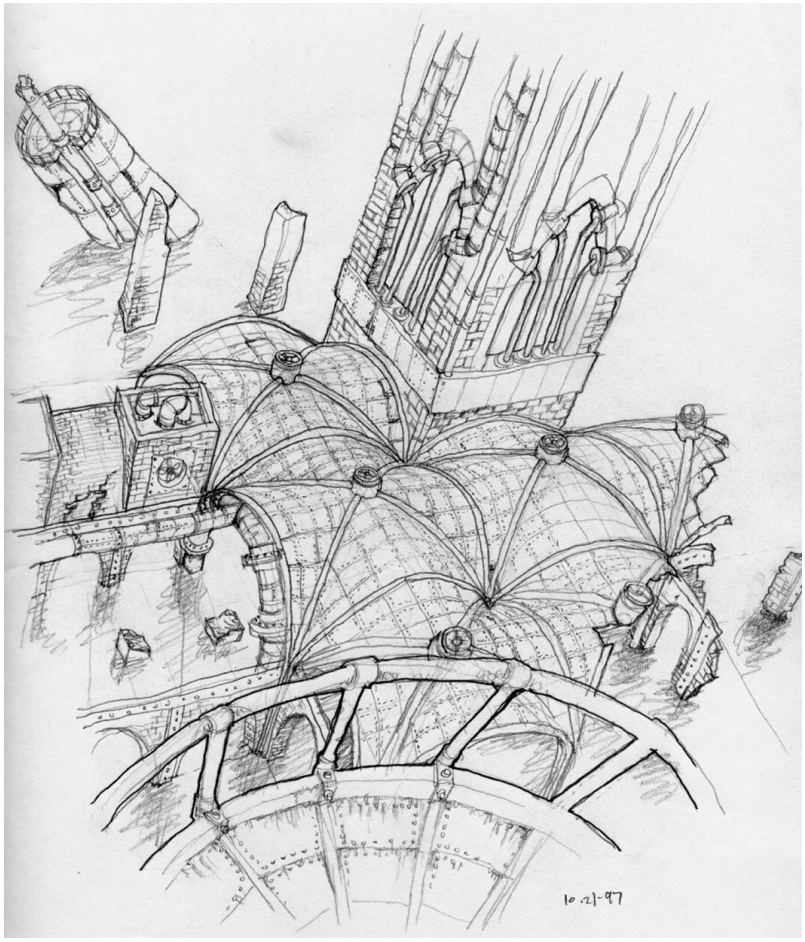
Melchiah's tombstone is decorated with a praying angel; no exact match for this design has been sourced.

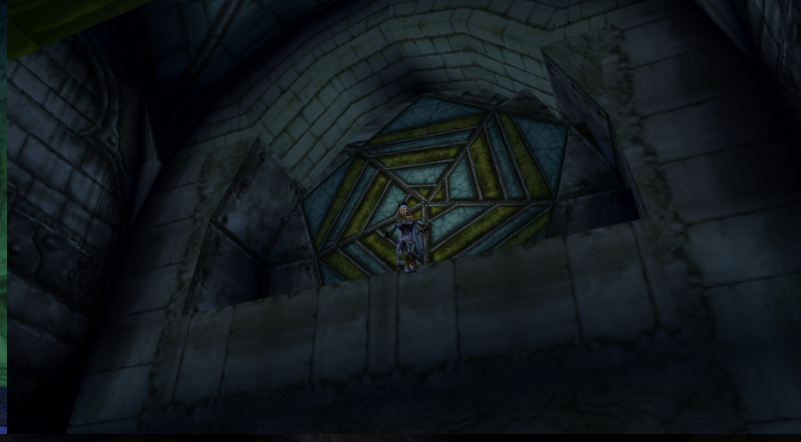
Malek's tombstone was defaced by Kain (see the large scratches). The statue referenced is La Fiducia in Dio (Trust in God) by Lorenzo Bartolini.

Sarafan Tomb Chapel texture sets
(bottom two are unused)

The Drowned Abbey

“Yes those are Turelim designs in the Abbey. We had implied that there were 'turf wars' between clans where areas claimed by one group were invaded/supplanted by another. In this case the Rahabim flooded areas they wanted to claim, and forced Turelim out of the area. The Turelim took the area from the humans who designed the chapel of light, and in turn the Rahabim took it from them. Look for signs of clans exchanging hands. :) We left the boat an ambiguous area and hadn't really worked out if it was human or Rahabim.” — Daniel Cabuco



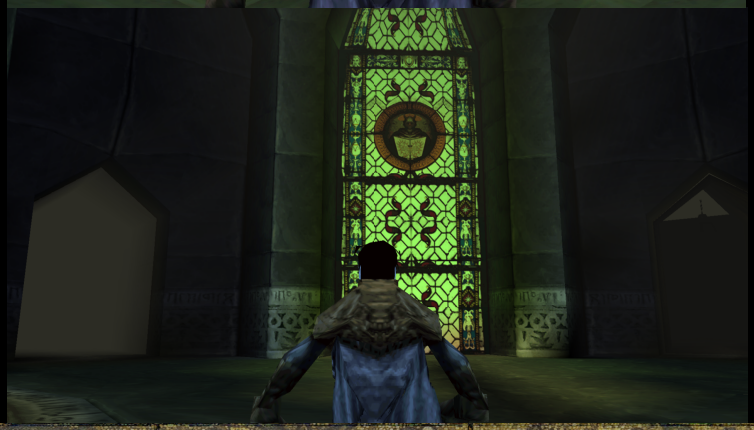


Below: Originally, the Force Glyph altar was accessed via a long corridor within the lake containing the boat. With the entire room submerged, Raziel would rely on telekinesis to topple the pillars.

The Ruined City of the Dumahim

Raziel finds this city abandoned and lying in ruin, with only a couple of Dumahim left alive. All of its other inhabitants are long dead, their scorched or impaled remains littering its floors.

The layout of this area was slightly altered during development. The throne room initially had two access tunnels on the sides, as opposed to a central one. The courtyard at the rear also led up a snowy hill, where Raziel would discover the entrance to the Oracle's Cave (see below).



Above & right: This reconstructed mosaic floor from the throne room originates from the Dome of the Rock's walls

The Oracle's Cave

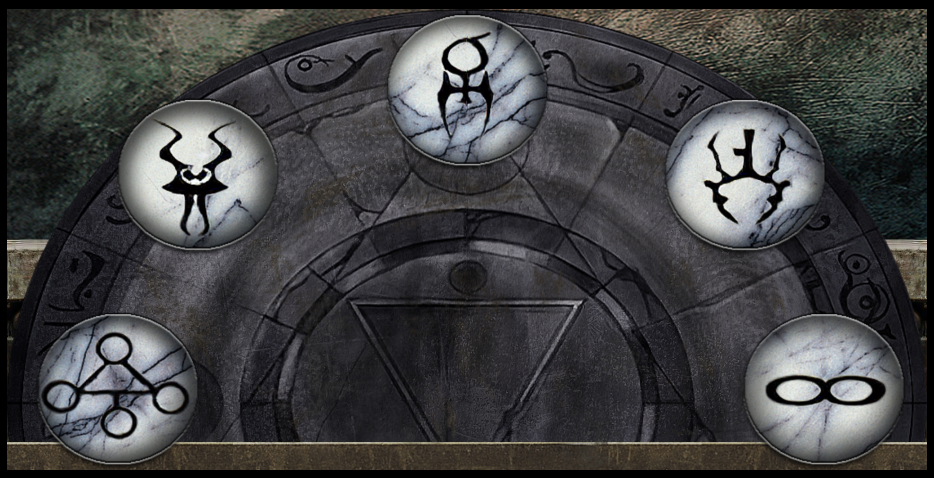
The mysterious cave from *Blood Omen* returns in *Soul Reaver*. Revealed to be an elaborate labyrinth beyond the chamber where ambiguous prophecies were dispensed to strangers by Moebius in disguise, the Oracle's Cave spreads deep underground. In this game, the museum section only includes Moebius's vampire hunter banner. Other artefacts are no longer present.

While solving the puzzles within, Raziel was to stumble upon an ancient prophecy depicting himself wielding a sword opposite a mysterious skull-faced figure dressed in dark red. The retail release only features a profile of these enigmatic murals, and the figures on the trapdoors were removed, retaining only the colour-coded symbols in their place.

The original version of the Oracle's Cave also featured a patch of ice which contained the only reflection available in the game. However, this was cut due to potential bugs (because the effect relies on drawing two instances of a moving object, the player can find themselves with two Raziels on the screen!). This technique was later reused in *Soul Reaver 2*.

The Chronoplast

The second battle with Kain takes place deep within the northern mountains, below the Oracle's Cave's labyrinth. Its entrance is concealed by a slew of many symbol-based puzzles which Raziel must solve in order to gain access.

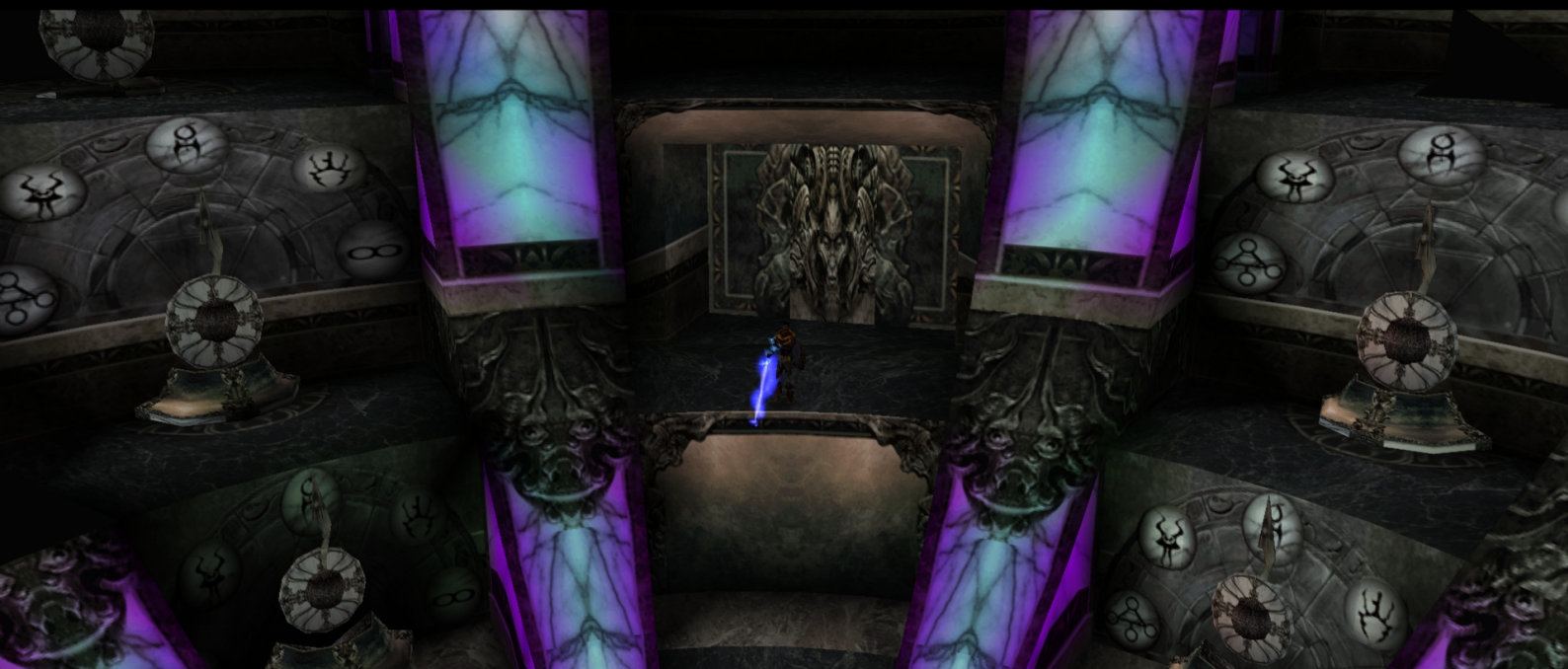


Originally, the anteroom consisted of only a long corridor, with no winding infinity symbol-shaped path containing prophetic portals. Instead, these portals were supposed to be situated within the main Chronoplast chamber, with Kain revealing himself from the shadows once all of these were viewed. This was later altered with an additional set of winding corridors, where Raziel witnesses each vision in separate sections.

Above: The original entrance to the Chronoplast chamber, with a side tunnel for the warp gate

The textures of the main chamber were renovated over time. Instead of creating a brand new set, the artists repurposed material previously destined for Kain's Mountain Retreat. This is apparent in the door's distinct "head" design which borrows brick and relief styles from the Retreat, whose metallic walls also feature throughout the room (see below).

Above: An early, unfinished incarnation of the Chronoplast



The Reaver Forges (Partially Unused)

The Forges played a significant role in earlier story drafts; Raziel would need to baptise the Reaver in each of them in order to access Kain's Mountain Retreat and defeat his master. Some better hidden than others, they were crucial to defeating vampires, for the Reaver's finishing move had not yet been conceptualised while they were implemented.

The six Forges were Sunlight, Water, Stone, Fire, Sound, and Spirit, but only the Fire Forge survived into the final game, moved from Raziel's Clan Territory to the Drowned Abbey. After plunging the Reaver into a given Forge once, Raziel was empowered to re-imbue it with the corresponding power by interacting with environmental elements (e.g. bells).

Above: The April prototype build included a heads-up display for all six Reavers: Sunlight, Water, Stone, Fire, Spirit, and Sound

Below, from left to right: Sunlight, Water, Sound Fire, Stone, Spirit

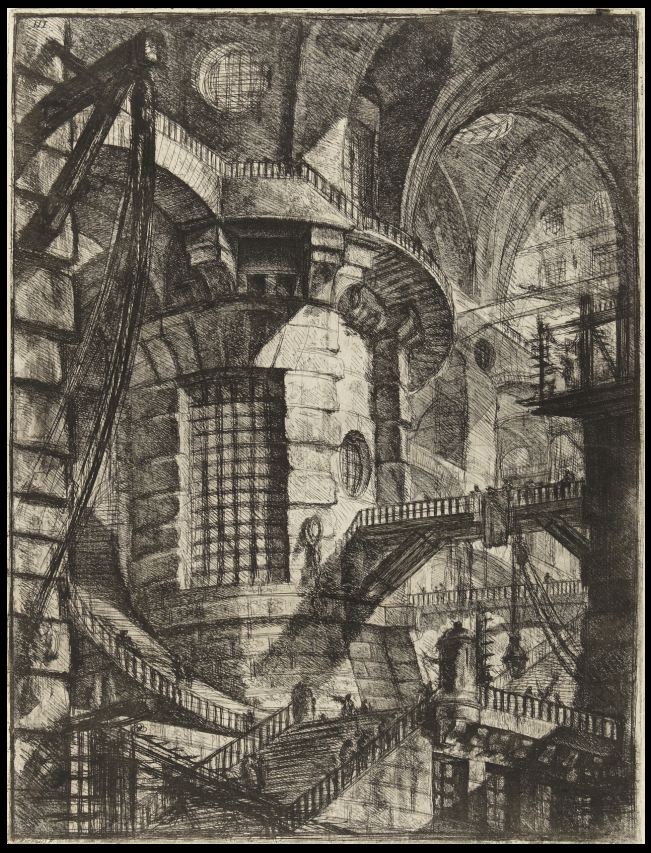
The Spirit Glyph (Unused)

This eighth mysterious glyph spell was cut from the game circa April 1999. It was originally intended to be discovered en route to the Smokestack, and required the Shift-at-Will ability. These rooms were ultimately moved to the Human Citadel, repurposed for a health upgrade puzzle.

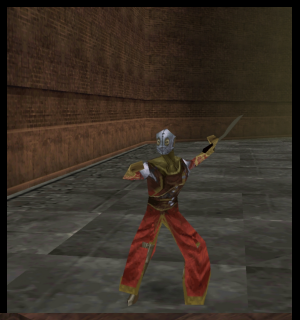
Below: Early ring menu/glyph designs, including the Spirit Glyph

The Undercity (Unused)

The deleted Undercity was to be accessed via a tunnel from the rear of the Citadel which housed a canal. Raziel would require Shift-at-Will to phase through the grate there, swimming via pipes into a large subterranean complex housing several large circular towers. Its design was influenced by Giovanni Batista Piranesi (see below).



Raziel's objective was to reach the tower at the top. In order to do so, he would exploit three sets of floodgates to submerge the main chamber and enable him to swim to its upper reaches, where he would confront the vampire worshippers' leader, the Priestess.



The Smokestack (Unused)

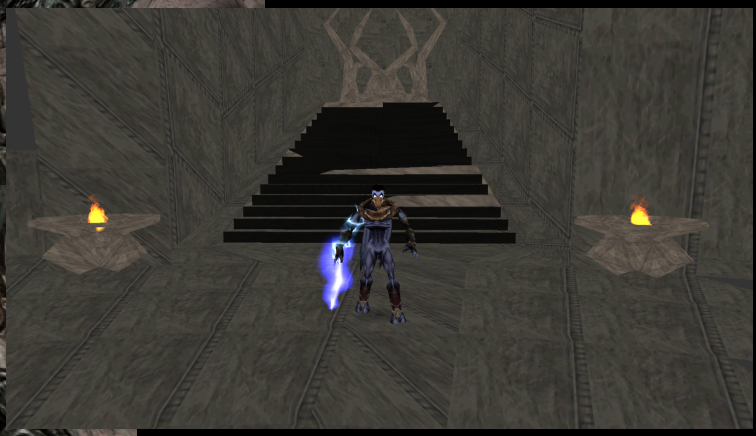
This scrapped area was the native home of the Turelim. Raziel's task was to set the orrery spinning by activating three switches, which would trigger a turbine above, creating an up-draft in the central furnace required to ascend to a plateau high in the mountains where Kain had retreated. The area was treacherous, containing molten lava which would destroy Raziel if touched. Turel's personal lair was located past the cistern.

Above: This symbol is seen throughout the level

Kain's Mountain Retreat (Unused)

The elusive Kain's hideout, the Retreat was situated high in the mountains, only accessible via the Smokestack. Prior to its removal to satisfy time constraints, this was one of the game's most beautifully-decorated locations, featuring lavish stained glass murals and elaborate architecture. Raziel's final showdown with Kain was to take place in the throne room.

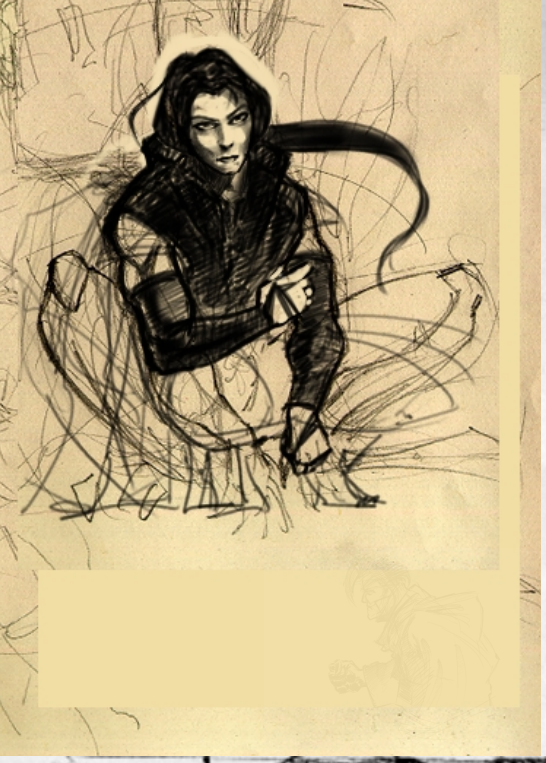
Left: Raziel would have to walk underneath these highly decorated arches to get to the throne room

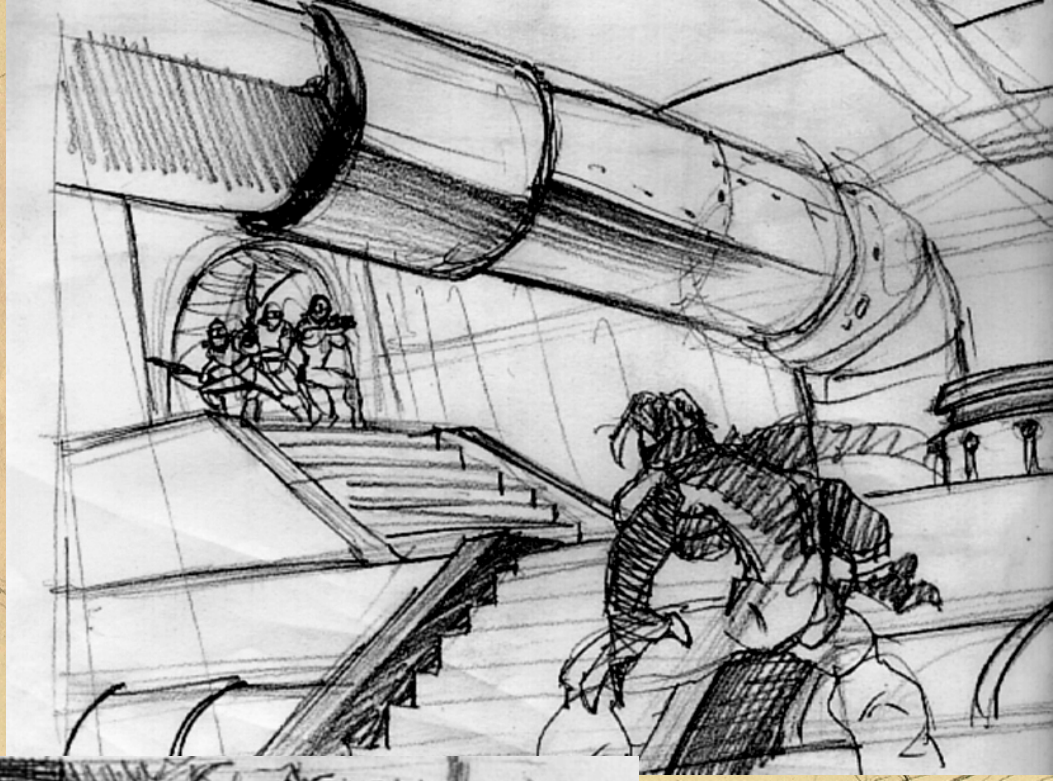


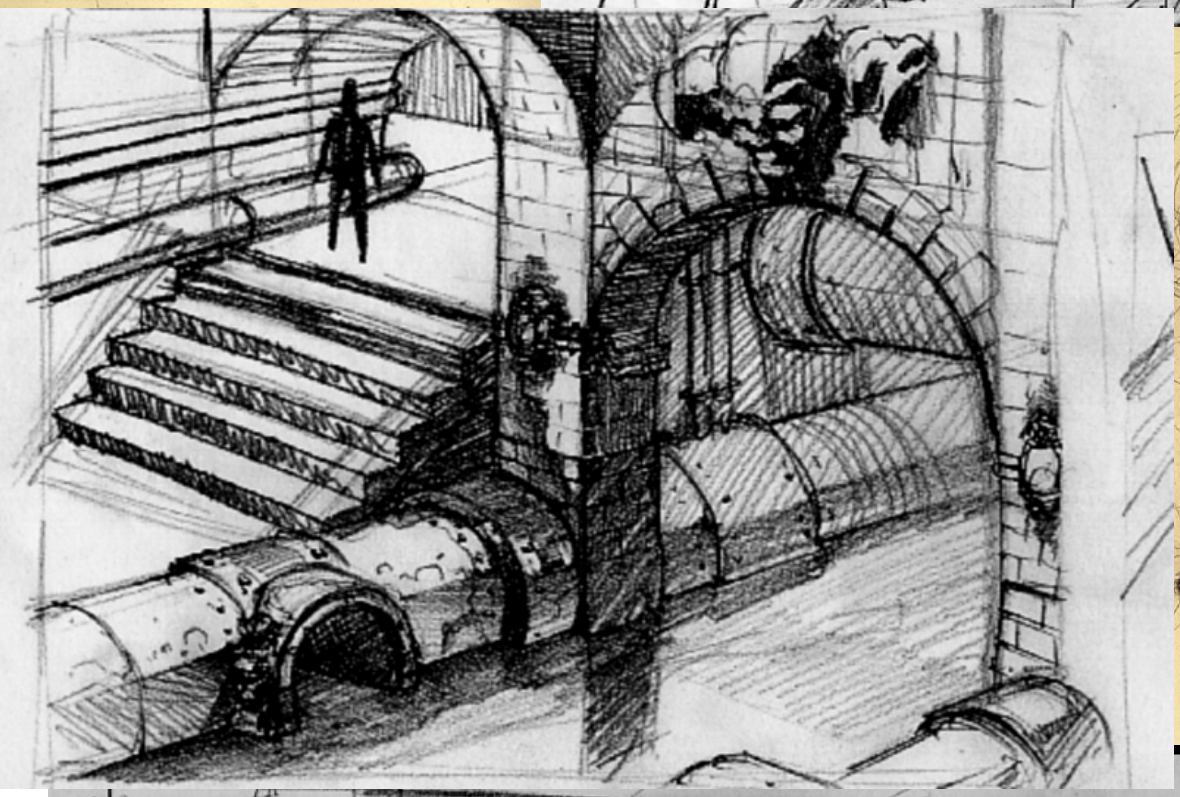
Above: Early throne room with template textures

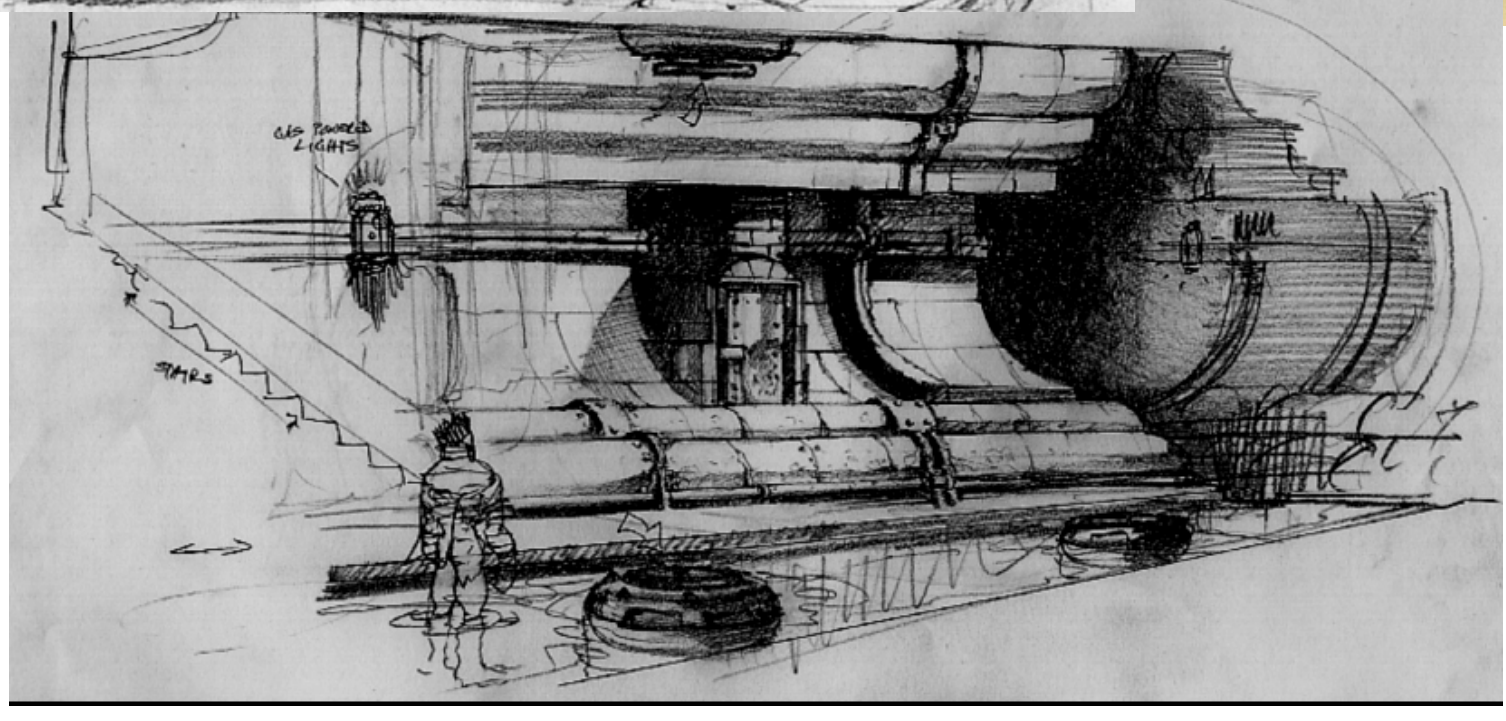
Below: Empty alcoves would possibly have contained relics from Blood Omen

Various Concepts

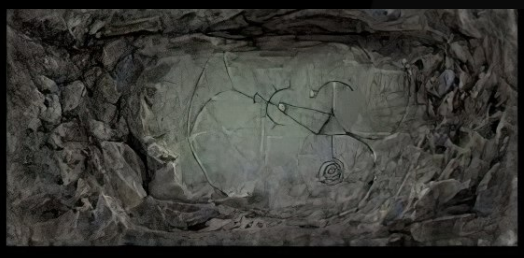


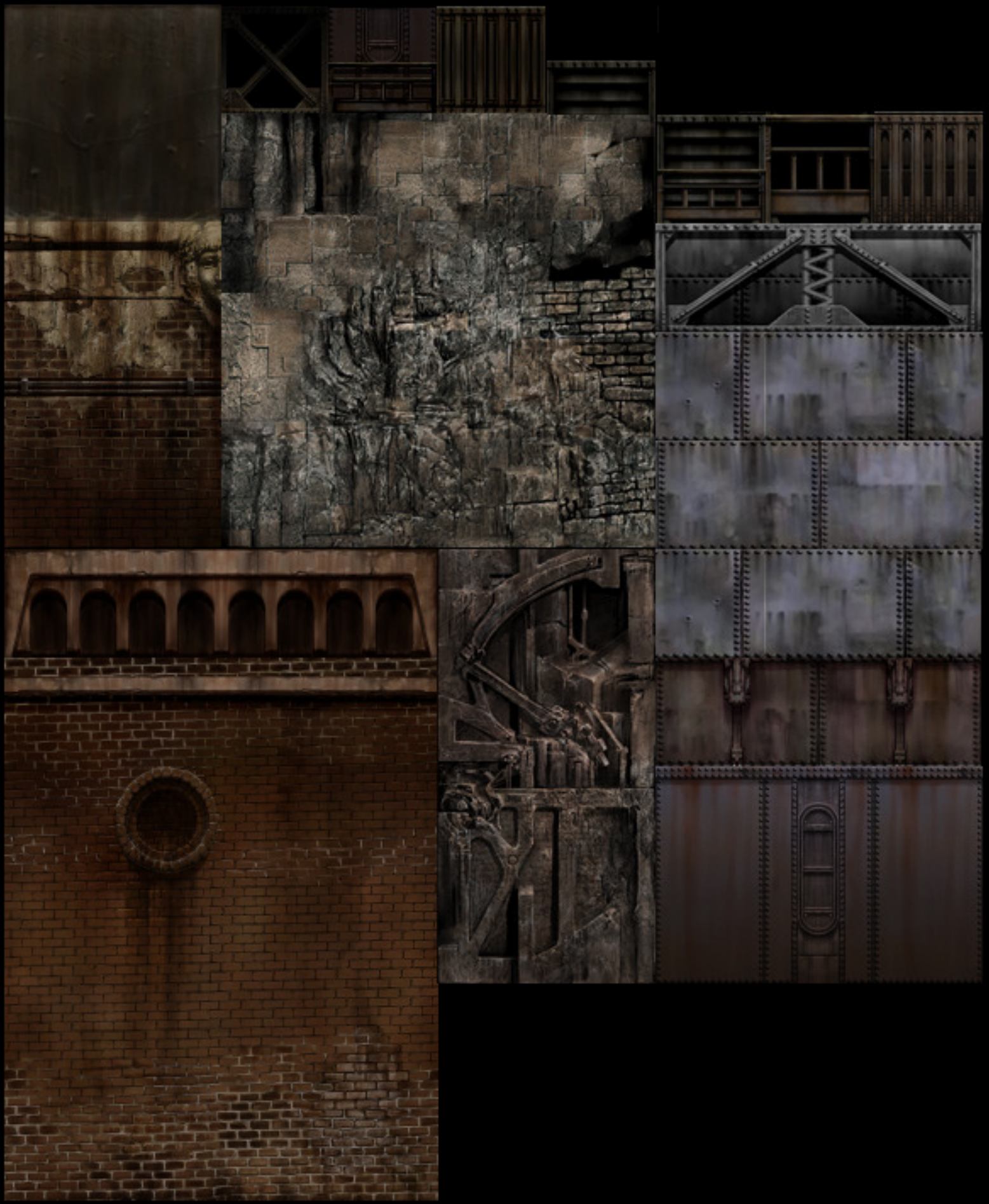


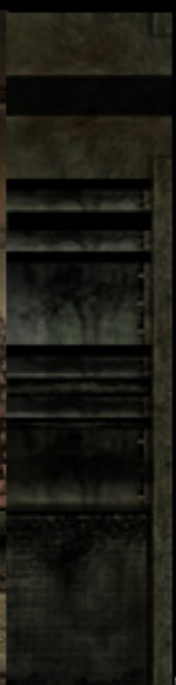



GAS POWERED
LIGHTS
STAIRS

Various Texture Sets

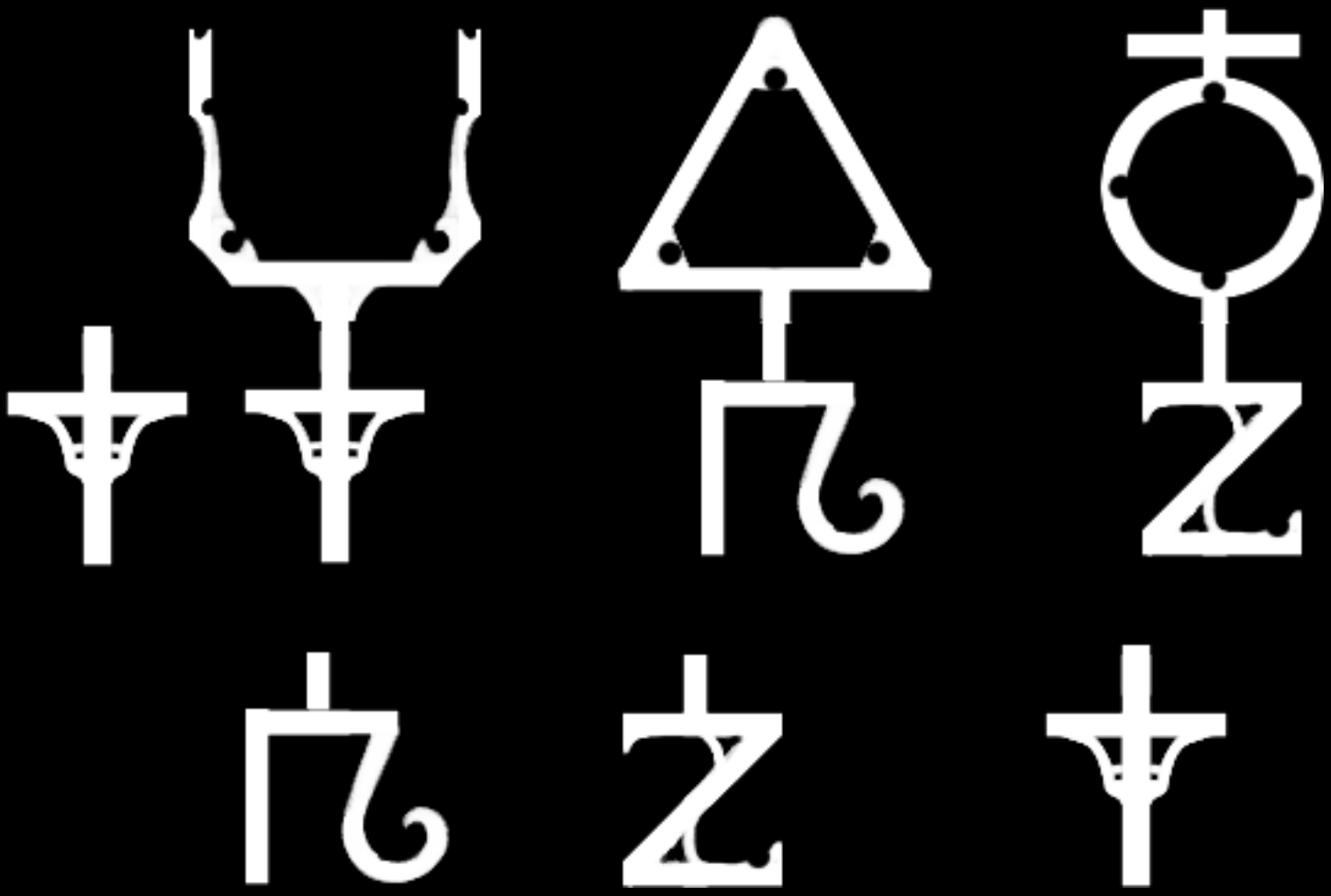


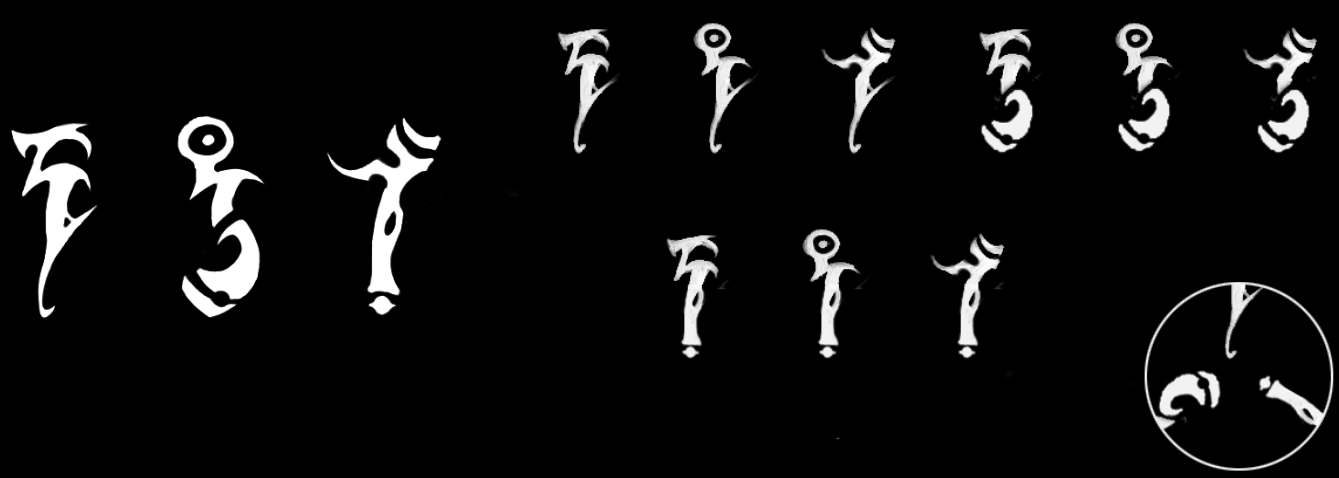




Chapter 5:

Symbology





Evolution of Glyphs

Clan Symbols

Clan Symbols

Each clan is designated by a symbol with a diamond. The associated Clan Leader's insignia is formed by the reflection of that symbol, with no diamond.

Zephonim

Zephon

Melchahim

Melchiah

Dumahim

Dumah

Razelim

Raziel

Rahabim

Rahab

Turelim

Turel

Pillar Symbols

States

Nature

Time

Mind

Balance

Conflict

Energy

Dimension

Death

Game logos

The game's early logo was based on that of *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain,* using the same font for the *Legacy of Kain* section, but this was later updated to incorporate a bespoke font and distinct colour.

Chapter 6: Community interviews

AesirHod

Project: *Serioli of Nosgoth (github)*
Fav LoK game: *Soul Reaver*
Fav LoK character: *Kain*
Other games I enjoy: *Silent Hill series, RE series/RE2 remake liked, MGS series (don't like Konami much anymore), Final Fantasy 7, like remake (ps5)*
Other hobbies: *Getting platinum trophies, drawing, Hellraiser franchise (horror), metal and rock/industrial music, Marvel movies*

INTERVIEW

> How did you get into the LoK series and which game was your first?

Seen the elemental Reavers, seen the extra dialogue before I got to play the game. I got to the end and none of that was there, must have missed all the secret stuff. Then I found NR and TLW which elaborated on these. When Kain says 'these chambers offer insight for those patient enough to look', I thought the game was telling me I missed something.

> What were the hardest obstacles when programming these utilities and how did you start programming?

Started playing around with WinHack (elemental reavers) after seeing what Ben did on TLW. I found a section in the code which handles the glyphs and started tampering, accidentally offset one of the textures. Ben suggested I could extract the models. Then started experimenting with Cheat Engine, PS cheats, gameshark codes, etc. As an example, let's say you found Raziel's model data and you type in some random garbage so his model starts getting distorted. Then you get a debugging tool and then you tell it to skip certain lines of code or not, then it gives you an intentional change you made instead of breaking the game. Raziel's bones you can set them all to 0, so it becomes distorted mesh, but you can see what the game is doing and write down notes.

Over the years, the information just builds up and suddenly you can extract the models, resurrect debug menus, etc. Some of the debug builds of the games have these sym files which helps us so we do not have to guess things anymore. Since we do not have the source code, these files have the names of the functions so there is still some guess work involved but much less than when we didn't have these. I am not trying to decompile it, just trying to understand it enough so we can edit the models and environments.

It's a few steps back from what the TR guys are doing. Reverse engineering the data is much more feasible than trying to put the assembly language back to source code. It's taken me since the game was published to this day to accumulate all this knowledge so even if it doesn't get further than this stage, it is still more than I ever dreamed of. I am aiming to have some sort of a hybrid between the alpha build and the retail areas, but it also depends on being able to reconstruct things like boss fights and cutscenes which I have yet to discover how to work out. Ghidra takes the symbols files and executable of the game and makes an attempt to recover the source code – a bad approximation which needs to be manually corrected which would take years. It can't tell when one variable has been reused as another one. The Dust Remembers software combines Ghidra with symbol files so now we could have something like the source code with the correct functions and variables, so that this Dust Remembers tool creates.

Collision in SR1
Terrain breaks down into subsets of spheres and cubes. Each subset is made up of two boxes and polygons are grouped into these two boxes. Sometimes a polygon will fit into both. One set of measurements says what should go in the box, the other set is what is in the box. Should this polygon be A or B? Once you sort them, sometimes they will overlap, then you need to calculate a new box which covers everything inside it. Rather then checking individual polygons, it just checks the relevant ones you are colliding with Raziel.

> Which features would you like to see enabled in future games?

My wishlist for a BO2 remaster would include fixing the unfinished level select room, costume select, including his BO1 armour, and BO1 soundtracks as well. Alternate controls closer to the rest of the series would be great to have too. Also for that game, bringing back the ranking system from BO1 would add some replayability.

For the Soul Reaver games, I just want to see as much of the cut content come back as possible. Given that many of the cut abilities are overpowered for the original game, my suggestion for including them in remasters is to either have them be post game unlockables, cheats or for things like the deleted elemental Reavers, those could be purely visual effects like the 'Kain' and 'Ariel' Reavers from the original game. For a true remake, however, I'd want to see these properly incorporated into the story, perhaps with Turel being summoned to the past just as Raziel is about to finish him off in the Smokestack.

> What can you tell us about Soul Reaver's programming language?

SR1 is C or C++. When you make a video game, it starts in C or C++, then when that gets turned into the assembly language it's just letters and numbers, but you can see where it makes a decision (like multiplication). DC and PS have all different assemblers. SR1 uses a specific language for its event system – how puzzles are solved and cutscenes. It's a series of numbers, each number is followed by another number, it is really confusing.

SR1 audio system uses the same sort of thing so it is difficult to figure out, we only have raw data, there are no structures or variables. I think the only person who knows how it works is Kurt, he might have done a lot of programming himself.

> Can you tell us more about "Recombombulator" and why you chose this name for it?

It is the opposite of discombombulated which means confused, disordered. It is supposed to take the jumbled, mangled data into something which can be understood. The bigfile is just an archive of all the DRM files, rooms, objects (Data Ram). Recombombulator can read these files and display the structure, interpret the nonsensical data and puts a number, turns it into a tree view. You can see all the spawn points for example. Number is a number, text is a text, it displays it as it should be. It helped me learn what all these data structures are for. It is like going into Windows Explorer and you can see all the files in folders. It was originally just an experimental program. It tracks the position of each data structure, so if I were to add an extra data, it would be all moved and the data would be in the wrong place (think red links on Wikipedia).

Recombolulator can correct this problem - you can now (probably me) insert objects into the level and the game will still load it fine (enemies, new levels), it is now possible. Bigfile is basically just a database. In any PC program the simplest structures have parameters which are made up of integers, letters, numbers, you can't make the data simpler than this. I make a list which each of these is stored in and anything that has the address of these primitives points to the first primitive in the structure. I basically store the old location in a list and see its new location.

Future plans
I want to write a utility which will fully automate adding new levels into the game, build a hybrid bigfile with levels both from retail and alpha versions. Fix water transparency. Full ring menu in SR2 to do.

Aevum

Website: *Legacy of Kain Wiki*
Fav LoK game: *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver (1999)*
Fav LoK character: *Mortanius*
Other games I enjoy: *Might and Magic/Heroes, Oddworld, Soulsborne/Elden Ring, Final Fantasy, Ratchet & Clank, Hades, among plenty others*
Other hobbies: *Academic writing, dog walking, motorsports, producing video game mods, web design*

INTERVIEW

> What was your first experience with LoK?

My point of entry to the series came in 1998, when I was far too comically underage to be caught engaging with it. In the dark ages back then, magazines and the accompanying demo discs were among the only accessible means of feeling out the current gaming landscape and determining what was worth your money (not to mention convenient for circumventing those pesky, meddling age ratings).

Well within the single-digit age bracket, I played the earliest “Lighthouse” demo for *LoK: Soul Reaver* included with editions of the *Official UK PlayStation Magazine* and was fascinated. This two-minute cliff-jumping exercise lacked a lot of context, but still felt evocative enough to send me wondering what the deal was with this mysterious, damaged character and his stark, visceral world. Even without any narrative to speak of, it gave off this uniquely difficult-to-describe, almost hypnotic sensibility in the often overstated and gratuitous gaming landscape of the late '90s.

In a later ‘99 demo disc, the acclaimed intro sequence appeared and set me reeling. It would be a fool’s errand for me to try conveying just how mind-blowing and compelling this cinematic was for many people at the time. Ben Serviss’s beautiful deconstruction comes far closer than I am able to. I'm sure the FMV was directly accountable for much of the game's success! I'd liken the experience of discovering it to watching the most amazing, intrepid music video you'd ever seen, then being invited to explore the world it presents at your leisure. Serious propellant for the young imagination, and perhaps impossible to recapture.

These were games I needed to buy and play. Gradually, I saved up for and devoured the entire series (the original *Blood Omen* being particularly tricky to locate through a long scavenger hunt).

Above all other factors, it was the writing and atmosphere which captivated my soul. The poetry and cadence of each game's not-quite-Elizabethan dialogue, masterfully acted beyond anything we'd experienced in the medium to that point, compelled and endeared me into replaying it over and over until I'd memorised and comprehended virtually every spoken line. Like everyone else featured in these profiles, I have no problem reciting most of it on command. I still have *Legacy of Kain* to thank for breezing through every English Literature exam I've ever taken. Don't let 'em tell you that video games rot every corner of your brain, kids.

> How did you get involved with the LoK Wiki?

By 2008, I'd gained stable enough internet access to have spent some time casually researching the games again, and understanding the online community's perspective. Marie Tryhorn's Dark Chronicle and Ben Lincoln's The Lost Worlds were two of the premier destinations to learn about the series' mythology and development, not to mention your own YouTube channel, which brilliantly accompanied these sites to keep the fans' torch burning bright. Inspired by all of this, and impressed by the depth of some of the discussions still playing out, I started participating on the Nosgothic Realm and Eidos boards here and there.

In 2009, somebody raised the unfortunate issue that the Legacy of Kain Wiki at Wikia.com was, putting things mildly, in a state of disarray. Established in 2007 but effectively abandoned, the place was somehow awash with plagiarised text from the aforementioned major fansites, fan fictions, fan artwork, falsehoods, misunderstandings, outright gibberish, and what have you. Even the administrators of the fansites I'd relied on chimed in on that discussion to express their personal dismay, which was so disheartening to see!

The *Legacy of Kain* series deserved to be much better represented. I had the spare time to burn back then, and had played around with Wikipedia and fan wikis before (enough to grasp the basics, at least), so I chose to join the small group of four or five people signing up to overhaul the unacceptable mess. As one of us noted:

"The way I see it, this wiki does exist, for better or worse. So long as it exists as a piece of crap, which it is, it is detrimental to the series in my opinion."

Gradually, we succeeded in clearing out the majority of the issues, to the pleasure and gratitude of the other fansite owners, but before long, Bazielim and myself had become the last two standing.

Our overhaul of the wiki is still ongoing today, in the limited time we can spare, and still painfully work-in-progress – but I'm proud of what we've managed with very, very little. There have been fewer hardcore participants there than I tend to see around other wiki projects, and even fewer new games to create fanfare which would attract people, so it's remains up to us to deliver a comprehensive and presentable resource for posterity. Today, if you've read anything about the series on either Wikipedia or Wikia, the chances are pretty high that the content was either written or extensively tampered with by one or both of us.

> Do you have a favourite page on the Wiki which you are proud of the most?

I'd say it's much less the case that I feel proud of pages which I've left left in a fair state than I feel terribly embarrassed of pages which are still unfit for purpose or lack content. The wiki is such a large, time-consuming endeavour - and the series deserves a high standard of writing and analysis, which can be slow to deliver.

Nonetheless, I think The Elder God's page is probably the one I've pulled closest to its full potential - to me, it harnesses more or less as much as we know of that character as there is to know (which is admittedly not as much as I'd like), packed with descriptions of his role and deep character study and commentary. I wish I had the hours in the day to polish everything else on the site to a similar level. In recent times, more and more of that gruelling work has fallen to my very dear friend and long-time partner in graffiti-scrubbing, Bazielim.

I'm prouder than anything else of having created, fleshed out, and maintained the LoK Wiki Archive, a project which sets out to preserve and host all interviews, commentaries, and portfolios from the production team we have been able to save for readers' convenience. It stands as the sole remaining place to view many such items where the original sources have been lost over time.

> How do you approach the archiving process? The safest bet is to realise that everything is ephemeral and liable to vanish yesterday or sooner. Copy and paste it, transcribe it, download it, archive it with the Wayback Machine, archive it yourself, repeatedly back it up, and, of course, put it up there on the public wiki for others to browse. Leave nothing to chance or the whims of whoever else is running a short-lived server you cannot control.

These lessons were learned and absorbed the hard and fast way (with the unpredictable, overnight demise of the Square Enix Forums remaining a particularly stinging blow). Some items have been trickier and more involved than others to recover, but, thankfully, I believe the vast majority of material historically considered important to fans has successfully been salvaged and reproduced.

With this repository set up, we'll also be well positioned to keep track of everything if *Legacy of Kain* ever returns to production in some form. We never know when developers' words on the record may prove interesting or come in handy in future. Any commentary within the public domain is considered fair game for posterity.

> What would you like to see in LoK's future?

Legacy of Kain may have been summed up as an accumulation of bold, grand, daring ambitions left only partially fulfilled due to circumstance, tantalisingly close to its true potential – one of the most beautiful messes in video gaming. Looking back over the Square Enix era, a fair case can be made that it started as it meant to go on.

It’s remarkable that even now – an era or two of reboots, remakes, and remasters removed from the original production period – nothing has taken off in a meaningful way in 20 years. I've had the opportunity to advise or look in on a number of credible projects and pitches over that time, and without going into specifics, take it from me that even the most honest, well-meaning efforts can tend to spin off and derail into strange eccentricities which nobody within fan circles would anticipate going in.

Talented writers who possess self-confidence but only superficial understanding of the material may find themselves reconstructing narratives and images which previously resonated in bizarre out-of-context fashions, which fall flat; marketing teams who underestimate the audience may come up with arbitrary prescriptions which range from the eyebrow-raising to the much more alarming (e.g. nixing the possibility of a Black LoK protagonist as though players would struggle with this); and, well, famously, higher-ups once concluded (against the wishes and advice of their own team) that an arena deathmatch multiplayer, on its own steam, would make for an appropriate reintroduction of the series after a decade.

This scratches the surface. None of these things seem inevitable to me, but even without anything emerging out of the gate, new teams seem to overcomplicate and second guess the series in unusual ways which leave the rest of us scratching our heads after the fact.

Ultimately, one of the driving purposes behind my involvement in the wiki project was a strong desire to leave the series much less murky and much more approachable for new creatives as well as new fans, hopefully mitigating some of these weird issues in the future. However, the site is more of a resource for technical correctness, less concerned with what feels thematically or spiritually proper. Deeper engagement both with the material and the fans is vital to understand what is meaningful and interesting for new projects and what is not, in much the same way that no screenwriter in their right mind would attempt to adapt Tolkien’s works without sufficient knowledge or consultation around his world and ideas.

I think future creatives would best serve themselves by really taking some time and space to ensure they understand this world to the full. Nosgoth should be approached as the rich setting and mythology it is, with enormous scope for world building – one which houses thousands of years of dramatic and tragic history as real to its denizens as ours is to us.

It has guiding principles and rules and norms which can be broken, but which can better serve to provide advantageous structure for designers. It has a wonderful antihero protagonist, whose macro-vision for his world and intellect and complexity as a character on many levels should always take focus over juvenile interpretations which reduce him to a cartoon villain where murder and edginess is the supposed appeal. It needs to widen its lens, but more in terms of its diversity and inclusivity than the chasing of trends which would leave it untrue to itself. It teems with all too many concepts whose execution can be greatly refined and realised for the modern era. It is more than the sum of its parts.

The possibilities are endless… unless you have not gazed deeply enough.

Allard

Project: *VK.com/allard*
Fav LoK game: *Soul Reaver*
Fav LoK character: *Kain*
Other games I enjoy: *Fallout, Knights of the Old Republic, The Elder Scrolls, Baldur's Gate, Castlevania, old Sega Mega Drive games*
Other hobbies: *Russian rock bands you probably never heard of :D*

INTERVIEW

> You are known for your prolific Russian translations among the community! How did you get into this originally?

I wanted to do game translations for as long as I remember. When our family first got a full desktop PC I was dreaming of translating some of the old PS1 games I used to play, like Crash Bandicoot, those didn't have good translations back then. But it didn't happen until a few years later when I saw the less-than-stellar Russian localization of Mass Effect 2 and discovered a community-made tool that would allow me to edit the in-game text. Revising the Mass Effect 2 translation became my first project, after which a few other translations followed, such as Skullgirls, Blood Omen, Shadow Warrior and Knights of the Old Republic.

> You have worked with many fans, among whom Verok was one! How did this collaboration come about and are you proud of the result?

Verok used to have a blog (that is now sadly defunct), on which he posted his patches – his body of work is not limited to just BO1, but also the old Need For Speed games, Freelancer, classic Heroes of Might and Magic titles, Disciples, et cetera – so when I discovered his Blood Omen 1 patch and that it has a subtitle feature, I was eager to make Russian subtitles. He gave me his email address and the rest is history. Working with him was a delight, he's a very approachable, down-to-earth guy and together we were able to take it beyond what I originally anticipated.

> Do you have a favourite translation project you worked on and why?

Is it too bland if I say BO1? Back when I discovered Verok, I was not in the best place mentally and working on that translation kind of took me out of it. It did take longer than I thought (then again, the same is true for every project), but it was a very rewarding process. There is something meditative about making edits, booting up the game and seeing how everything looks in action. Also it allowed me to do image editing to translate the interface (since all the menu buttons in BO1 have the text drawn right on them rather than overlaid like in other games – and that's not mentioning all the road signs and whatnot) which is not something I normally do, and while I won't say I'm great at it, I think the end result turned out pretty decent overall.

Aside from that, I also enjoy working on my Knights of the Old Republic translation, even if the newest edit is taking way too long.

> What was the biggest challenge you encountered so far while translating?

The biggest challenge is always having the technical means to make a translation. I’m not much of a tech guy, so in this regard I have to either rely on existing tools or collab with someone who is. Thankfully, most of the tech guys I have collaborated with so far – Verok, ivanproff, Fanssciw and others – were the absolute MVPs.

Ardeth Silvereni

Website: *Dark Chronicle*
Fav LoK game: *Hard to choose between the first three, but probably Soul Reaver edges it.*
Fav LoK character: *Impossible to choose between Kain and Raziel.*
Other games I enjoy: *Puzzle games, or retro Silent Hill, Final Fantasy or Resident Evil.*
Other hobbies: *Blogging about spooky stuff.*

INTERVIEW

> What drew you into making a website about LoK?

I was an active member of the two main message boards for LoK: Nosgothic Realm and the Eidos Forums. There were endless discussions about plot and character motivations, and as a fandom we are all about the details! The Nosgothic Realm website had dialogue transcripts of Blood Omen and Soul Reaver which we referred to all the time, and when Soul Reaver 2 came out we needed one for that game too. I prepared one and hosted it, starting my own fansite. My site took the name 'Dark Chronicle' as that was the name of the in-game transcript of Soul Reaver 2's cutscenes. Over time, I added more information to the site, so it could address frequently asked questions about the LoK series, and help newcomers get to grips with the complex story.

> How difficult was it for you to track all the info, screenshots, etc about the LoK games in the early days of the internet?

Back in the early 2000s there were fewer options for fans to come together and chat, so I think we weren't dispersed across multiple platforms. If you were a LoK fan and wanted to discuss the series, you'd end up at Eidos and/or Nosgothic Realm. This meant the most dedicated fans were in the same place, and all of us shared whatever information we found. We really were a fan community. Eidos was also the 'official' message board of the series' publisher at the time, and so we got some 'Word of God' details passed to us. Adding to Dark Chronicle actually helped me to track everything we knew, and to share it with others. It was not too difficult while the information was fresh and I had the time to devote to it.

I didn't have YouTube playthroughs to refer to when I transcribed the dialogue of Soul Reaver 2, Blood Omen 2 and Defiance. On weekends, I had a pad of paper, and I wrote down the dialogue while playing the PS2 versions at home. I then had to type it on my PC when I returned to my University room. As my site grew, I played the PC versions, and relied on 'print screen' to get the images I needed. I remember using a small tool program to get screenshots from the Blood Omen cutscene videos.

> What is the most memorable moment from the series for you?

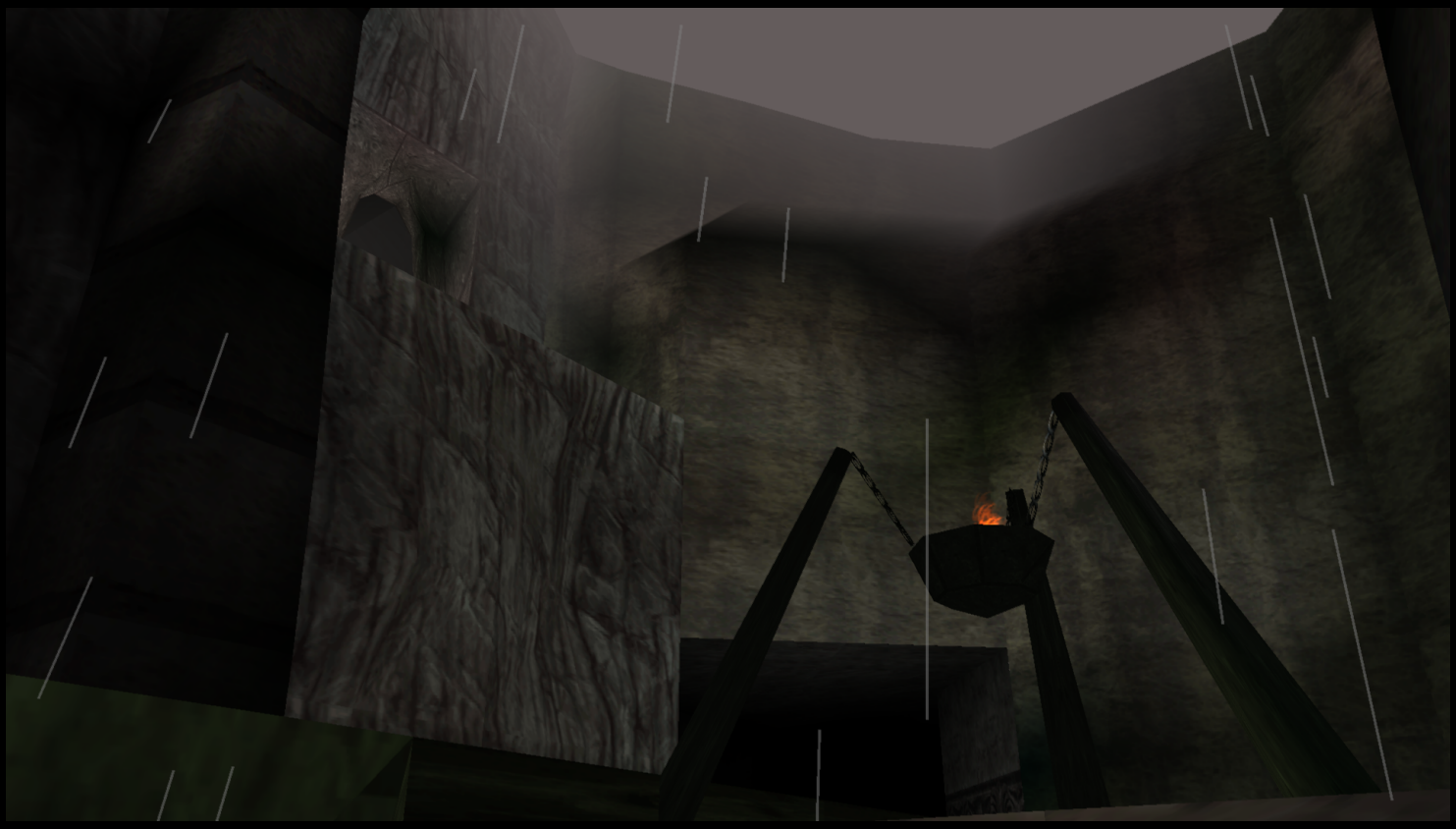
The opening video of Soul Reaver was my introduction to the series and it still has impact. The final part of Soul Reaver 2, from the meeting with Janos Audron through to the ending paradox is perhaps my favourite sequence, as it's just one revelation after another.

> Do you still replay the series from time to time?

Occasionally. Soul Reaver, mostly, as I especially enjoy the fairly open-world feel to the game, and I can play it on my PS3. I think I'll play them more as my children get older, so I can introduce them to the series. I'm long overdue a replay of Soul Reaver 2.

> How did LoK influence your life in general?

It gave me a practical project for learning web skills, which helped me get my first proper job. I met some fantastic people who were also fans of the series, and we still keep in contact after all these years. It probably trained me to be analytical too, considering how much effort I've spent pouring over LoK resources! I appreciate complicated storylines with antiheroes and lots of world-building in other media too.



Bazielim

Website: *LoK Wiki/Fandom*
Fav LoK game: *SR1 & SR2*
Fav LoK character: *Moebius*
Other games I enjoy: *Outer Wilds, RDR2, Horizon, GOW 2018*
Other hobbies: *Gardening, fish keeping, football, narrating videos*

INTERVIEW

> What was the deciding factor behind your work on the LoK Wiki at the time?

I think at the time I'd just left University and walked into a recession and with job opportunities a little dry I decided I had to do something to preserve my research and writing skills. I'd actually been intrigued with the wiki concept from my time at uni as Wikipedia blossomed into public consciousness and had my eye on several fandom wikis that I thought could benefit from a bit of attention. I'd even gone as far as making notes for Red Dwarf and getting the Blake's 7 audio dramas, but it was the speculation on the Legacy of Kain wiki that troubled me the most, so I made some noise on the forums and soon ended up diving in. Funnily enough that choice ended up completely changing my life.

> How did the Nosgoth community day affect you and what did you think of the Nosgoth MP game when you first saw it?

Nosgoth was one of those things that I almost feel I was in the right place at the right time. Myself and Aevum along with a few others had spent years transforming the wiki, collecting and preserving resources and turning it into a credible LoK site with reliable info. Then all of a sudden there was some solid evidence things were being worked on. We made contact with the community manager George Kelion who had shown up on the forums. He was a guy with infectious enthusiasm and we'd gone back and forwards for months discussing the way things worked in Nosgoth – what there was evidence for, what was implied – lots of 'strictly in the dark' discussion. But I don't think I really knew 100% what was going on until the day of the event.

I was very flattered to be invited – with all the big names it felt like something special to be a part of and I kinda felt a little unworthy, but it was great to meet everyone and I've made some lasting friendships and relationships from that awesome bunch of people. It changed my life in so many ways I couldn't have imagined. My first impressions of Nosgoth were pretty good actually – it was like having a curtain pulled back. So whereas others were a bit worried about it, I knew from the discussions that we'd gone into a lot of detail on the lore, already so to find how that was being implemented was exhilarating.

Of course the multiplayer focus was perhaps something that had caused consternation. But I'd grown up as the eldest of three boys and learned to alternate between story heavy single players and various deathmatch and multiplayer with my brothers and friends, so I wasn't too fazed with the genre. Playing it I recognised that it was a good game they'd come up with, so I felt confident that they'd do well with it.

Ultimately we and others continued to help them out where we could for the next few years – they didn't always follow our suggestions and guidance and there were plenty of areas where we could say we didn't really agree with the direction, but I generally felt the game was a decent experience that was judged harshly for its departure from the series formula. Nosgoth didn't make it through in the end. In many ways it's a shame because I do feel they had the basis of a really good game and they ended up suffering for a lot of things that weren't really under their control.

> How do you do your research?

In many ways it's all about the research. One of the things that became apparent through my studies and applying that to LoK for the wiki was that there is a lot of room for interpretation and speculation – and while that can be fun to have head-canons and such it doesn't necessarily help with building an encyclopedia and spelling out concrete facts. So in the first place it took a lot to adjust and put aside my own speculations and ideas and concentrate on what was 100% known and not dwell on theory – and a good portion of my first years were indeed spent on removing some of the wild speculation that had become rampant without moderation in the early years.

In those early years I spent a lot of time in order to gather as much official – or 'word of god' information as I could about LoK. I bought guides and collected as much related content as possible and with the aid of the community came into possession of original scripts, early prototypes, behind the scenes information. We've collected various interviews from magazine and websites – and in recent years we've been at the heart of a drive to try to preserve as much of that information as possible: sadly the early internet is not necessarily preserved all that well and I think it's important for those of us that were there and have records to help others where there is information that would otherwise go missing and lead to big unnecessary speculative gaps. The whole process has actually led to myself and others building up several archives of LoK resources that we've tried to make as public as possible so they can be enjoyed and learnt from by all.

> What is your method for writing articles?

Generally, it's still all about the research. Okay first off I'll probably review what is in game, what is up there in stone if you will and look at the related dialogue. That forms the basis of the main part of the article: what is – or should be – obvious. I suppose it helps a little to be a native English speaker because I can perhaps more easily pick out some of the subtle implications crafted into the language that give further clues.

Next I'm looking at guides and manuals to see what the game has on the subject at hand that isn't necessarily spelled out in the game. This add another layer of texture. Then I'll dive into the further sources archive. Experience can help here because there is tonnes of information in there and it can help to have a rough idea where to look. Is there pre-release information that can go into a development section? Has a developer explained the subject further. Are there any other juicy bits of relevant information I can find? Those go toward Development and Notes Sections. And once all the info is gathered I'll start writing. Generally I have some sort of skeleton or template in my head before I start: Profile, Design/Layout, Powers, Development, Apocrypha, Notes etc.

Once that is done I'll grab some illustrations – again I've spent years gathering a vast library of images from various sources for the wiki, but sometimes there might need to be fresh images taken or scanned to properly illustrate the subject. Finally I'll go through referencing and making sure everything is properly listed and any format flourishes are working properly. And then hopefully when all is good I post an update.

> How do you feel about your screenshots and writing being used in other aspects of the fandom?

I must admit there's a lot of vicarious pleasure that come from that – and I guess it reflects how influential and respected the wiki has become. Behind the scenes it has taken a lot of effort over the years to write and maintain for it and I've at various times gone through with trainers and the like to try to take perfect screenshots, so it's flattering to so often see screenshots either that I have taken pop up or that I know have originated on the wiki – and the same goes for when people debate things and I know they're using turns of phrase that I wrote, that originated on the site, or that we publicised. It can be a humbling experience.

On the flip side, it can be amusing watching people trying to use those words in debates when they've obviously read the article but not fully looked into the sources, haven't quite got what was being discussed… or don't know who they're talking to. For that reason I sometimes wish people would read into the references and original sources a bit more.

> How did you get into narrating LoK videos?

I blame Raina Audron. Seriously though, it has really helped to have a partner that has a background in videos and editing. For me personally it was kind of tied to the Soul Reaver alpha reveal. Prior to those videos people had been requesting that we do some kind of lore round ups and I was inspired by lore videos I'd seen of other series but I don't think we really had any idea on how to really put it all together – and at that time we were secretly in possession of some of the alphas and were working away behind the scenes to prepare for their reveal. And then the pandemic hit and everything changed. When we did the BO1 alpha in 2018 we'd struggled to get everything together and ended up with only a few articles and a low-key highlights playthrough at the time.

Suddenly with furlough and working from home we have a massive amount of time just before we were planning to release and it gave us plenty of time to experiment with new ways of showing things. Basic ideas became longer videos, highlights packages and we decided to incorporate verbal explanation. Raina decided my voice was better for it – and I was a little more comfortable speaking – and so I started writing and narrating while she put the videos together. The end result showed what we could do and led us to developing the concept further with the Arcane Tomes and other explanatory videos – and a bunch of other voice work… as well as a proper revisit of the Blood Omen alphas.

> The Blood Omen alpha series was your first solo video project. How difficult was it to suddenly direct the whole thing on your own?

Thanks for not helping, Raina Audron. :D It's been a ride that's for certain. Obviously with Raina occupied with other projects I had to pull everything together for the Blood Omen alphas. It kinda started with me writing and recording for the SR2 beta and BO1 alpha together for the anniversaries in 2021 – with Raina doing the editing and video work for SR2 and me doing BO1 – but there was so much in BO1 that it ballooned into a larger thing while Raina did her other projects.

It has been a bit of a trial by fire but I've gotten to experiment with a few visual ideas and being able to fall back on the advice of a video veteran and having a huge library of images to back me up has helped immensely. I think I got the hang of it now and I'd say there is a marked improvement in the initial videos vs the later ones. Hopefully, it bodes well for future video output on the channel. There is still lots to cover and lots to illuminate.

Ben Lincoln

Website: *The Lost Worlds*
Fav LoK game: *Soul Reaver*
Fav LoK character: *Raziel*
Other games I enjoy: *Other games I enjoy: Control, Wasteland, Dead Space, Metroid*
Other hobbies:
** Photography and exotic imaging*
** Exploring abandoned places*
** Music and audio processing*

INTERVIEW

> What is your most treasured LoK memorabilia, one you couldn't part with?

Probably the signed Soul Reaver 2 poster that Amy Hennig gave me years ago, because it actually passed through the hands of the whole dev team.

> Any interesting detail you remember the most about your visit to Crystal Dynamics?

There was so much research material (from the series, but also from other sources) in Amy's office. It would be really neat to be able to travel back in time and poke through that library.

> What would you consider the best moment in the LoK games for you?

The introduction to Soul Reaver, I think. I don't think I've ever felt more drawn into a story. There's something about the combination of the in media res approach with also managing to convey a sense of a deep history behind every word and every detail on screen.

> Which deleted part from Soul Reaver do you regret being removed the most?

That's a tough one. Overall, maybe the Undercity, because it would have given the Citadel a greater sense of purpose, the Possession ability would have been a lot of fun, and it could still have worked even without the original ending. In terms of level design, Turel's territory looks amazingly atmospheric and is huge, so it feels like the biggest loss to me in terms of playable areas. In terms of gameplay mechanics, the missing Reavers, because it was clear that the team spent a lot of time scattering the various ways of imbuing them throughout the game world, and I think that would have tied everything together even more effectively.

> From all the amazing recent discoveries of the early versions of Soul Reaver, did this unearthed content match up to your expectations? Or were there many things you imagined differently? How did you feel when you finally saw the Undercity and the Smokestack areas?

The material we found far exceeded my expectations. I didn't expect the deleted areas to be so large, or so close to completion. I didn't expect to find so many other differences, like the placement of the Sunlight and Sound Glyph areas, or the entrance to the Sanctuary of the Clans.

Seeing all of that with my own eyes was incredible. I didn't think it would ever actually happen.

> Your website preserved so much of the LoK series' history over the years. Did you ever imagine there still be new things to discover 20 years later?

I thought there would still be undiscovered material, but that we'd never actually find it because it was all locked away in a closet at Square Enix, or a landfill.

> Where do you get your info from? (Taken from the iceberg meme "Ben Lincoln knows too much" ;)

Most of it is just from learning how to do the things I'm interested in. I learned how to do reverse engineering because I wanted to convert content from the Kain games to standard formats. Now I know a lot about reverse engineering as well as obscure 1990s/2000s game file data :).

> The Soul Reaver to Blender Conversion Toolchain is amazing, how did you come up with this idea and was it difficult to execute correctly?

Thank you. The main goal of nearly every tool I've written related to the games was to convert the content into a standard format so people could examine it and use it in fan projects if they wanted. The toolchain was just a really complicated variation on that. I wanted to be able to see how all of the pieces of the game world fit together. AesirHod's ModelEx tool could export individual rooms for use in Blender, but trying to piece the game world together by hand would have been months of tedious work just for one version of the game. I knew I'd need to make it automatic in order for it to ever get done. He did most of the really hard work, in terms of writing ModelEx and Recombobulator. There were definitely some challenges, though, like trying to figure out how the game represented translucent materials and other effects, figuring out some Blender automation features that weren't documented well at the time, and coming up with a way to automatically add the highlighting boxes and text.

Butane Boss

Website: YouTube
Fav LoK game: It's a never-ending tie between Blood Omen 1 or Soul Reaver 1.
Fav LoK character: *It has got to be the eponymous man himself. Kain's character is a perfect cross between upperclassmanship and sheer depravity.*

To me, there's an ambiguity surrounding Kain's nature, whether his evil acts are due to his vampirism, The Corruption, or both. The elder Kain is a clearly a figure who has spent a long time self-reflecting; he knows he is corrupted and he eventually decides to be something greater, abandoning his empire to achieve this end. It is unclear to me whether he has genuinely grown to want to save Nosgoth from corruption or he just wants to finally be able to fulfil the role of Balance Guardian. Post Defiance, I believe Kain's character arc should be him wondering what kind of person he is without the corruption that he's grown with for all his life. I like to headcanon that Kain was unknowingly masking his corruption for all his human life and was heavily disciplined by his family for his "naughty behaviour", but when his vampirism unshackled him from human etiquette, it enabled him to be the bastard he was corrupted to be. Gosh, I have a lot of headcanon ideas brewing in my head (which I hope don't get torpedoed by any miraculously new Kain content).

Other games I enjoy: *DOOM, Quake, Metal Gear, Unreal Tournament, Drakan, Deus Ex, System/BioShock, StarCraft, Elder Scrolls, Fallout, Valve Games, a bit of Sonic.*

Other hobbies: *I like to go cycling around local woodlands, listening to music and making MIDI recreations of some favourite songs.*

INTERVIEW

> What made you into a Legacy of Kain fan for life?

Alongside my brother, it was a convoluted way how we got into it. It started with the old demo disc that came with the original PS2, and it came with a trailer for Soul Reaver 2. I am ashamed to say that though it looked cool, I probably didn't think much of it at the time. Years later, my dad had a PC magazine which came with a DVD with a whole load of software demos, one of which was a demo for Soul Reaver 2. This was the Sarafan Stronghold demo that ended when you jump into the Great Southern Lake.

My brother and I loved playing this demo. Personally, I was interested in Raziel's reconnection with his Sarafan past, weirded out by the other-worldliness of the Spectral Realm and, most of all, intrigued by the constant mention of this mysterious and powerful Kain.

Sometime afterwards, my brother got a PS2 copy of Soul Reaver 2 from that now-defunct shop GameStation. I spent hours exploring the worldspace in SR2, being wowed by the cutscenes and binging the bonus features (left triangle right triangle down circle X; yes, I still remember that).

I then got a PS1 copy of Soul Reaver 1 off of eBay, the one with that neat holographic cover. When playing, I was blown away by how much of a better game it was compared with SR2. My brother and I then got the other three games second-hand (aside from Blood Omen, which was a digital copy off of PS Store) and that was when we became true Kainheads.

> You are known for your crazy super fun short videos! How did you get into making them?

All those years ago, my brother (yes, he turns up a lot) got the Orange Box, which was our avenue into becoming fans of Valve games. From that, I stumbled onto videos on YouTube made in a silly program called Garry's Mod featuring Team Fortress 2 and Half-Life 2 characters with silly faces doing silly things. I was inspired to emulate this that I got myself Garry's Mod to make my own videos. In my pre-YouTube infancy, I made very crude stop-motions with plasticine figurines, having been inspired by Aardman and the claymation series Klay World, so stop-motion animating in Garry's Mod was familiar territory to me.

Throughout my time as a Garry's Mod animator on YouTube, I bumped into a few people online here and there, but the most influential (and dare I say, life-changing) community I have become a part of is The House of Gmodders. These folks have given me constructive feedback and advice on my animation, have shown me the wonders of an in-game keyframe animation addon, and are great friends to hang out with on VC. (Shout-out to the folks in HoGM! <3)

I also like making YTPs on the side, which compliment the humour of my Garry's Mod videos. Sadly, there's quite the absence of LoK assets ported to Garry's Mod that I resorted to reskinning TF2 characters into LoK characters (personally, I think this also adds to the humour).

> Is there a particular mod you really like or feel proud of making?

That's a tough question since I've been playing game mods for an awful long time and it really, really depends on what I want out of a mod. TheKinsie has made two really great DOOM mods I have binged for a while: MetaDOOM, a gameplay mod for DOOM that manages to be an amalgam of every DOOM game; and Reelism 2, a very replayable horde mod that is so unhinged and humorous (you can battle a giant imp made out of imps, slam-dunk basketballs onto enemies and EAT CARS). Engine fix mods, retexture mods (terrific work on SR1:R, by the way!), total conversions, quality of life tweaks, etc. There are too many to count for me, but a lot of love goes out to them for all their work.

As for my own modding pursuits, I had made a few DOOM maps in the past using Doom Builder. A good few years ago now, I made a wave-based survival map for StarCraft, which was popular in one YouTuber's community and I still see references to it floating around. It involved the affable main human character of StarCraft "going f***ing mental" and killing the universe out of a sick lust for blood. ("I'M THE MAN".)

Right now, my current modding focus is on Skyrim, and my best Skyrim mod so far is Ancient Nord Armo(u)ry EXTREME, an overhaul of one of the armour sets in the game. I have a growing reputation for making lore-friendly mods with the most unhinged marketing. It is my hope that I can use Skyrim modding as a medium to delve into creative writing.

> Do you have a favourite LoK meme? Can we expect more in the future?

Gosh, this is like picking a favourite child. My favourite ones are the Steven Universe 'How to Talk to People' ("STENCH OF THE FIELDS") meme, the Kain Iceberg I did for the 25th anniversary, the Princess Ottmar meme satirising the franchise's culling of female characters, the 3D Saul Goodman meme with the five iterations of Kain, and the meme where Malek stands up for himself.

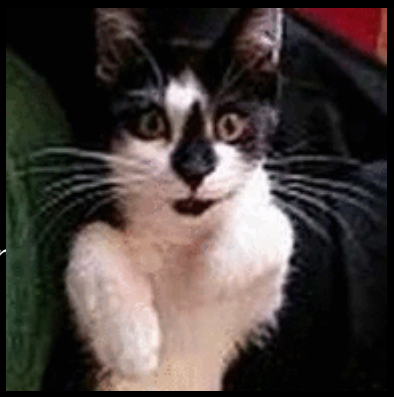
Personally, I don't view my LoK Garry's Mod animations as memes, but I have an animation in the works based on the scene where Raziel and Kain meet at The Pillars. Unfortunately, I hadn't touched it in a few months. As for future memes, it really depends on what I have in front of me. I have been making my more recent Kain memes with Blender and I do have the Source Engine model import/export tools and The Lost Worlds tools at my disposal, so I could port Soul Reaver 1 and 2 models to Garry's Mod and make my own grand and epic comedic version of Legacy of Kain 6, but I work a 9-5 in a totally different field to this and I sadly don't have the time commitment to do that. Like my recent Malek meme, I would like to sneak my own headcanons and writings into my Kainposts more in the future.

> Joke question: So why did Kain kick the Builder? :P

Alright, fine. I'll tell you. When Kain was a little boy in the Noble House of Wadulac in ol' Coorhagen, he and his little sister Annabelle loved to play together when their parents were out on noble duties (in truth, they were in the local tavern wasting money on the gambling machines). In one game, Annabelle and Kain competed to see how successfully they could kick a sack of potatoes. Kain failed miserably with a broken toe, yet his sister was able to launch the sack slightly into the air. Kain would never forget Annabelle taunting "haha, 'Kain', more like 'Foot Pain'; you suck lol". This act gave Kain severe inferiority issues in his youth, which have been left unresolved. During Kain's quest, Annabelle died in the plague, thus robbing Kain of his closure. Centuries later in this new timeline and this new crisis, he saw the Builder in the same position as the potato sack was. The only way he could rid himself of the score set by his sister and all the shame was to kick an object of equal or heavier weight. Successfully kicking The Builder broke the shackles of his inferiority and Kain was able to rise to become a better person than any of his iterations in the other timelines. Vae Victis. Oh yeah, Annabelle cheated by putting an iron in the sack when Kain wasn't looking.

@ButaneBoss
(why did kain kick the builder)
have you seen this man?
criminal
OUTFIT C
The Act:
what does this mean???
IF THE BUILDER HAD A SKINNY BUILD, HOW COME THE THUD SOUNDED WEIGHTED?
WAKE UP
F = ma
- simple cruelty?
- anti-hylden instinct implanted in vampires?
- to stop him from crawling off the edge?
- making him get up?
- prison irrationality gas?
- MOEBIUS???
clearly there are questions
why did KAIN kick the Builder
KICK ME
FAKE?

Divine Shadow / Mama Robotnik



Project/website (in order):

- *Creator of the first Legacy of Kain / Columbo crossover fan fiction (PETER FALK as COLUMBO in "The Unspoken Killer because it had to be done*
- *Moderator of the Nosgothic Realm forums back in the series heyday*
- *Creator of the first Legacy of Kain fan-game, Anacrothe's Adventures – currently hosted as a download on The Lost Words*
- *Research into Soul Reaver 2 and Blood Omen 2 save game hacking,*
- *Giving birth to the Legacy of Turelzevir parody site,*
- *Unearthing of lost concept art from various games in the series,*
- *Investigating and revealing various cancelled and unannounced LoK titles including Dark Prophecy and Dead Sun,*
- *Raising awareness of the LoK games in mainstream gaming communities e.g. Reddit, Resetera, etc.*
- *Ensuring my two-year-old daughter knows what the Soul Reaver is, and keeping her away from my LoK action figures – unsuccessfully.*

Fav LoK game: *Blood Omen. The game completely deconstructed the gaming and narrative tropes within video games at the time. You were no hero, the world was no paradise, and no one was telling you the truth. The atmosphere was unmatched, the gameplay was utterly absorbing, and the storytelling was transcendent. While future titles would certainly improve many aspects, the franchise could not have had a stronger foundation.*

Fav LoK character: *While my head says "Kain", my heart says "Moebius". The Time Streamer is a master antagonist, whose lies and misdirections are layered upon even greater mistruths. His guises – from doddering coot to condescending despot – each harbour a menace of their own. That he has his future self killed in the first game, in order to ensure his invulnerability in all subsequent titles (for killing him in his earlier self would cause a catastrophic time paradox), is the most ingenious shield. He is an unassuming old man, a mere human, treating gods and demons as his playthings. An extraordinary character, in any medium.*

Other games I enjoy:
Any Metroidvania,
The Command and Conquer franchise,
All the Nintendo staples (Mario, Zelda, etc),
Most recently – Hades, Slay the Spire and La-Mulana 1/2

Other hobbies: *Researching other cancelled gaming projects – one of my favourite finds was the design document for the cancelled Metroid Prime 1.5, which was certainly well received when I put it out there.*

INTERVIEW

> What drew you into doing detective work about LoK and other games in the first place?

Between Blood Omen's initial release and that of Defiance, there had been a stream of Legacy of Kain media content to keep me fulfilled. This took the form of trailers, magazine scans, previews, interviews, bonus features, and the constant investigation into the mysterious cut content present on the discs. I had become accustomed to new information about my favourite series.

And with the release of Defiance – radio silence. Years went by with no news, and Crystal Dynamics had moved onto to other projects. It was intolerable. With no information forthcoming, I found myself digging deeper into portfolios, resumes, career histories and anything else I could find on LoK developers, to fulfil this strange need.

The skills I developed in researching this franchise eventually supported me in eventually researching other franchises and companies I was interested in – Metroid, Sega, Silicon Knights, etc. My findings – published for free in articles on gaming forums – proved to be accurate and in some cases, confirmed by the companies themselves. Game media companies reached out to me to offer freelance work, and I took on a very generous offer by Kotaku, who were incredibly supportive.

> How long does usually take to research a specific topic?

This is a bit of a strange question to answer, as some topics simply go nowhere. For every article I've published about a cancelled game or other exciting piece of information, there are dozens of other attempts at research that hit brick walls. If there is a trail to follow, as there was with *Legacy of Kain The Dark Prophecy* and *Legacy of Kain Dead Sun*, I will give it my all. However, I have to admit that I have considerably less time than I used to have to devote to such things, as I now have a family and a significant career in a completely different field.

> What kind of obstacles do you face when you are trying to dig up information?

Between the years 2005 to 2015, researching these projects was considerably easier. Game industry figures were more comfortable with what they'd put on their portfolio sites, and on LinkedIn. Even through NDAs, a keen investigator could begin to map out developers that had worked on the same projects, and piece-by-piece, build the picture.

There seems to have been some sort of culture shift since then, at least in my view. My recent attempts at research across various franchises have not borne fruit – portfolios are more tightly managed, resumes are abrupt, and there is a lot less out there.

When I have previously exposed cancelled games, it has resulted in senior company figures releasing statements trying to manage the PR. I always wondered what internal politics followed this corporate embarrassment, and whether companies became much stricter in enforcing their NDAs and restricting what their employees could post.

The types of leaks we sometimes see these days – through hacking, exposure of company materials, etc – isn't methodology I approve of. Unless of course, it serves a whistle-blowing purpose.

> Do you have a favourite article you enjoyed writing the most?

Being the researcher to first reveal the existence of Metroid Prime 1.5, Eternal Darkness 2 and the legal documentation regarding the competing "KAIN 2" sequels were exciting moments. But nothing compared to the articles that first revealed Legacy of Kain The Dark Prophecy, and Legacy of Kain Dead Sun, to the world. While it was incredibly gratifying to bring this news to the devote LoK fanbase, I was also really happy to force the Legacy of Kain into the news again. I wanted the relevant companies to take note that the franchise is still loved, still relevant, and needs to return.

> Where did you acquire your profound skills in charts/graphics making? (love them, btw ;)

Thank you! This is a holdover from a previous career, in which I developed learning materials. However, I am actually only really proficient in a single art package – Microsoft Paint – almost everything I create is using this, sometimes with a little help from Irfanview.

> What was the strangest piece of information you have uncovered so far?

I think the most mind-boggling thing I ever researched and published, was the fall of Silicon Knights. To this day, I can't quite get my head around what happened. The company had achieved a nearly impossible feat – and become effectively a Nintendo second-party studio.

The security this granted them, the access to prestigious IPs (Metal Gear Solid, of all things!), and guidance from the literal grandparents of the gaming medium. It was the ultimate turnaround for a company that had been legally burned after the initial release of Blood Omen. Their future was so completely secure, and as someone who absolutely adored Eternal Darkness and Metal Gear Solid The Twin Snakes, I was so happy for them.

Then, Nintendo release the Wii, one of the best-selling consoles in the history of the industry. Silicon Knights openly mocked the name and perceived technical deficiencies of the console, arrogantly assuming that Nintendo – of all companies – didn't know what they were doing. Silicon Knights left Nintendo, and the descent of

the company from there on – through PR nightmares, critically-unsuccessful titles, the arrest of a senior company figure for horrendous crimes, and a self-induced legal Armageddon – was catastrophic. While not all of this could be pinned on their decision to leave Nintendo, so much of it nonetheless feels self-inflicted. This is the strangest story I've ever tried to tell in my articles, the slow, self-destruction of the house that built Blood Omen.

> What would you want to see if there was a future entry in the series?

There are a few answers to this, which I appreciate is a bit of a cop-out.

Remaster

I'd love to see remasters of Blood Omen and Soul Reaver. We are in an age where so many classic 32-bit titles are being given new leases of life – Powerslave Exhumed, Shadowman, Klonoa, etc. – that to exclude the Legacy of Kain series seems to make little business sense. Both titles would see commercial success as digital remasters, with Blood Omen patched to address its one major deficiency (loading times) and a Soul Reaver remaster based on the stunning Dreamcast release, perhaps with a few block puzzles cut out. These could introduce Nosgoth to a new generation.

Reimagining

A full-fledged 3D reimagining of Soul Reaver would be tantalising. By far the most commercially successful of the original games, there is so much in the design that could translate over to modern game principles.

Resurrection

My preferred option however, and I'm speaking for myself as a fan rather than as a speculator of industry success, is the ultimate Legacy of Kain sequel that I've had in my head for nearly twenty years. It is a dream that I feel now, the advanced processing power of contemporary systems, can achieve. It isn't based on a particular narrative, but what I feel is a stronger gameplay foundation.

I want to see an open world game with real-time time-travel. I want the next LoK protagonist – be that Kain or some other figure – to be able to shift in time in the same way that Raziel was able to shift between realms. I want to see start time-streaming from a ruined future, and watch the ruins around me un-decay, stand, and un-build themselves as we shift further into the past.

I want the game to be the ultimate mechanical realisation of the time-travel themes explored in the series thus far. I want a "paradox meter" of some sort, to indicate what actions can be taken that will pollute the timeline – imagine trying to break into a Sarafan stronghold, but being unable to kill one particular guard as his great-great-great-grandson designed the third tier of the Silenced Cathedral – and not knowing which guard he was, as they all look the same in their armour!

I want the main character to grow more time-proficient as they progress through the game, opening up greater accuracy as to when you can time-stream to (say you begin by only being able to parse decades, and end the game being able to stop streaming at specific days) and be granted the ability to stream to time-sensitive eras (e.g. the Hylden War, the future beyond Kain's Empire).

I'd see the above working through with some procedurally–generated elements (villages and denizens of Nosgoth across the aeons), and the use of SSDs and other advances, to facilitate the real-time time-shifting.

It isn't enough for Legacy of Kain to come back with an incredible narrative. It needs an ambitious gameplay hook to achieve success with the masses. I haven't played a game in which a character can cross time as a true fourth dimension, and I personally can't imagine a world I'd want to do this in, more than the rich tapestry of empires and enmities that is Nosgoth.

Gemini REBirth

Website: *Classic REBirth*
Fav LoK game: *Soul Reaver 2*
Fav LoK character: *Vorador*
Other games I enjoy: *Resident Evil, Dead By Daylight*
Other hobbies: *Ethnic cuisine, game controller hoarder*

INTERVIEW

> What led you to you work on the patches Revamped and Soul Fixer?

When I pick a game that I eventually end up patching, it's usually some title that I played when I was younger and that I want to re-experience in full PC glory whenever a native port exists.

I have very fond memories of both SR2 and BO2, so of course, I wanted to give them a try with a modern PC just to recreate that magic of the first playthrough from over 20 years ago (if I remember correctly, I played them on a Windows XP machine back in the day and they ran fine).

Unfortunately, when I realized how those PC ports have aged and that there was no definitive community patch to take care of the instabilities and tech shortcomings, I decided to investigate the games on my own and see if there was some way to fix at least the most serious issues.

> Which game was harder to develop the patch for? SR2 or BO2?

Definitely SR2! I had to document a lot of PC specific code that Nixxes came up with for the port, which is the first step to perform in order to figure out which strategies you can apply to make a game stable. From there it was mostly just documenting work around for all the strange bugs, crashes, and oddities that surfaced on modern hardware.

BO2 was a challenge in itself due to a different engine with its own quirks, but it was relatively easy to port over most of the SR2 patch features since the games shares a lot of the same PC code for porting it to Windows.

> Is there something you wish you could have improved better but ran into a roadblock?

Maybe controller support to navigate the menus and a proper rewrite of the sound code, with the latter being what made those ports extremely unstable in the first place. About the sound issue, I was baffled at how easily the sound could break and lead to soft locks or even crashes, but that's not uncommon with old games using deprecated sound libraries (an ancient version of FMOD, in this case).

I was able to come up with a fix that made the sound process run on a single core, just like back on Windows XP, but I wish I could have rewritten it all from scatch just like how I did for Silent Hill 2 Enhanced Edition. Unfortunately, the task was gigantic and quite time consuming, so I patched it up in the most straight forward way I could think of, but I'm used to rewriting sound engines from scratch or come up with whacky solutions, so maybe that could an improvement for a future patch.

> Which other games would you like to make patches for in the future?

Some of my personal favorites:

- Alone in the Dark 4: one of the best horror games from the PlayStation era, with mixed ports. The PC version looks nice, runs somewhat nice, but it has terrible audio.
- Dark Earth: this is pretty much Resident Evil, with swords, set in a post apocalyptic world, good dialogue, and it's made by the same people who created Nightmare Creature. Unfortunately it barely even boots anymore without extended fiddling, wrappers, and all that jazz.
- MegaMan Legends: I'm a big MegaMan fan and these games are the perfect balance of humor and exploration. As usual, though, the PC ports fall flat with bad audio, stability issues, and a fog effect that at base-kit makes everything display in white, rendering it almost impossible to play.

Glaiceana

Website: *Samantha Wise*
Fav LoK game: *Soul Reaver, the atmosphere of this game is unmatched!*
Fav LoK character: *Raziel, his tragic character arc is fascinating.*
Other games I enjoy: *I love quite a few different genres, as well as many old and new games. Spyro, Tomb Raider, Elder Scrolls, No Man's Sky, Minecraft, Euro Truck Simulator, Pokemon and lots more!*

Other hobbies: *Hiking, exploring, snowboarding, cycling, reading, films.*

INTERVIEW

> How did you get into LoK and what keeps you coming back to it?

My first experience of Soul Reaver was watching my step-dad play it when I was 8 or 9 years old. We played it over and over! I was hooked on the story, characters, the world of Nosgoth, everything. I loved the artwork in the credits too.

I keep coming back to all of the games as the story is just incredible, the music, voice acting, and characters are still engaging to this day. I recently encouraged my partner to try the game out, and he completed his first full playthrough of it last year (2021) and he loved it too, which just shows how well the game holds up!

> Do you have a favourite LoK character you like to draw?

Definitely Raziel; he is my all time favourite game character. His design is very distinctive and unique! He is always turning up as little scribbles in my sketchbooks!

> Your Raziel in water painting is absolutely stunning, can you let us know how long it took and what were some of the challenges you had to overcome when working on it?

Thank you! This was a digital painting in Procreate, it took about 5 to 10 hours. It started as a tiny thumbnail pencil sketch. I wanted to capture the moment Raziel gained the ability to swim, no longer harmed by it, and titled the piece "Water's Touch". It was very challenging to paint his hair, wet black hair was difficult to depict, since it still needed to have his disctinctive style.

> Which medium do you prefer? Digital or paper?

This is a hard choice, as they go hand in hand a lot of the time. I work in both equally, but if I had to choose, a simple pencil and paper is so easy to just pick up and sketch with at any time, no matter what mood I'm in.

> The dragon series you have done previously is amazing, do you have a favourite type of dragon?

Thank you, dragons have always been a big part of my imagination, they were the first things I tried to draw as a child that weren't real animals. My favourite type is definitely ice dragons!

> Which art styles and/or authors influence your work?

There are many choices yet again, but to mention a few: Wayne Barlowe, Ciruelo Cabral, Andreas Rocha, John Avon, Patrick Tatopoulos, Brian Froud. Creature art and environment art from these masters, in both traditional and digital mediums really inspire me.

Gh0stBlade

Website: *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver Decompile*
Fav LoK game: *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver 1*
Fav LoK character: *KAIIIIN!!!*
Other games I enjoy: *Assassin's Creed, Overwatch, Tomb Raider, Gears of War, Resident Evil, Call of Duty*
Other hobbies: *Programming, Gym and Cats!*

INTERVIEW

> How did you get into LoK?

I remember years ago when only the PlayStation was available. My father used to be obsessed with demo discs from those old magazines you could subscribe to. Subsequently, several Soul Reaver demos is something which was easily accessible to me at the time and is how I got into the franchise.

> What made you choose LoK for modding?

It came to my attention that unfortunately there were not many modders in the community and lack of tools as such to aid in modding itself. I decided to decompile the original Soul Reaver 1 which currently stands at over 50% completion. The level editor for it is very early and work in progress but hopefully one day it should be completed. I also have interest in learning how the Engine works at its core level to apply my knowledge to future titles on the same Engine to develop tools for those as well.

> What are you most proud of during your modding years? Which project you enjoyed working on the most?

I'm most proud that I've worked with many talented modders across various communities. The project I enjoyed the most was porting Resident Evil 5's console exclusive Gold Edition to PC prior to it being done officially. In addition, I absolutely enjoyed creating the Tomb Raider: Definitive Edition PS4 to PC conversion mod. Also Tomb Raider: Unfinished Business PC to PS1 conversion!

> What are the biggest challenges you have to overcome as a modder?

Learning the Engine and the file formats and what file does what. Reverse engineering file formats can be tricky depending on how the data is stored so it is quite a challenge.

> Any recommendations or tips for beginners in modding?

You should start off by learning a simple programming language such as C, C++ or C#. These languages are quite flexible and understanding how they work will enable you to write your own tools and become a modder!

The Hylden

Website: *ArtStation*
Fav LoK game: *Blood Omen: The Legacy of Kain*
Fav LoK character: *Kain*
Other games I enjoy: *I love games with narratives that let me immerse myself in them. From the Half-Life games to Alan Wake, to The Witcher games, to something more recent like Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice, or Horizon: Zero Dawn. Some of my favorite games of all time, that aren't Legacy of Kain, have to be Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time and Majora's Mask, and Metroid Prime.*

Other hobbies: *Working out; playing drums in my band; disc golf; movies; pool; out with friends enjoying the time we have*

INTERVIEW

> What drove you to create your texture mod for Defiance?

I loved playing through the games over and over. Though I love Defiance, I envisioned after SR2's great visual aesthetic in graphics to see something that harkened more toward that realistic, gritty style and one that was trying to get the character models closer toward how they looked in the GlyphX intros. I thought maybe there might be a way to do it once I found out you could possibly mod the textures using Texmod. I hoped we might one day see replacements of the models, themselves, so we could work with higher polygons and better animations, but that has yet to come to fruition. That is partly why I stopped, as I was progressing into 3D modeling and it was unfortunate that I would not be able to use any of that toward updating the games.

> What are the changes you are most satisfied with?

After a few tries, once I got the ability to rip models and paint directly onto them in programs, as opposed to just using Photoshop and trying to guess how things would line up from the 2D breakdown of textures back onto the models, I was able to achieve a LOT closer results. Just with a new coat of paint, alone, I could get details on them that just about got the characters as close as could be to their prerendered models from the intros, even if the polygon modeling of the model went contrary to that new paint. That was awesome. And much, much more, with the upgrades to environment textures, like the Sarafan Keep, I could almost make it look like modeled brickwork, or wood, or iron with come photo bashing and layered painted effects. I'm also happy with the more recent addition of adding ReShade configurations to the game to make the lighting seem more immersive.

> What do you think still needs improving and what you would change if you could redo the game yourself?

As amazing as what I can achieve has been, there are still limitations compared to this (ever-expanding) graphical era where we're used to hyper realistic materials – materials that reflect light and roughness, as well as have high detail depth to them from things like Normal Maps and Height/Displacement maps that Defiance just cannot show. But even without that, the models, themselves, in their polygon counts and how their UV layouts are divided up limit what can be achieved in bringing even more of an upgrade to the game's visuals. ReShade only fakes certain lighting and never will be a replacement for an actual lighting engine upgrade.

Then there is the game, itself, which if I was given the ability to redo, I'd have to also change some of the level and narrative structure, both to evolve better as the game goes along and to work better with the games' lore and world that came before. Raziel, I feel, should not emerge into the Cemetery until after he's found the Light and Dark Reaver upgrades, and after he's unlocked the gate that leads him out of the underground pit he's in to do it. That way you can play with vertical cave structures where "edifices" he says he cannot reach (but clearly he should be able to if you press the jump button right afterward) he'd really have to find another way to reach, and the gate to the Pillars would not also look like it should be bypassed, either by jumping over it or going around it. Nor would you wonder how Kain easily went through it yet Raziel cannot. He can fight more underworld monsters than just waves of vampire hunters that are easy to beat, maybe even fight against the elder's tentacles coming out of cave walls and such as he goes on this underground cave journey. We can also put back in the reason for him having to imbue the Reaver again in the Elder God destroying the temporary basins so old players aren't going "why are we doing this again?"

For Kain, he would need more to do than backtrack through the same Sarafan locations twice to reach Moebius, fighting the same hordes of Sarafan over and over again. The game, itself, needs more puzzle exploration (that feel a part of the world, not just there) and less locked rooms facing hordes of easy enemies with over-the-top moves and enemy attacks. The game becomes extremely repetitive through the Vampire Citadel levels, so these locations need the same care and diversity given to them as the temples from SR2. What works in the narrative when it picks up from Kain and Raziel facing each other to the end needs to be the level of quality the rest of the game should also achieve.

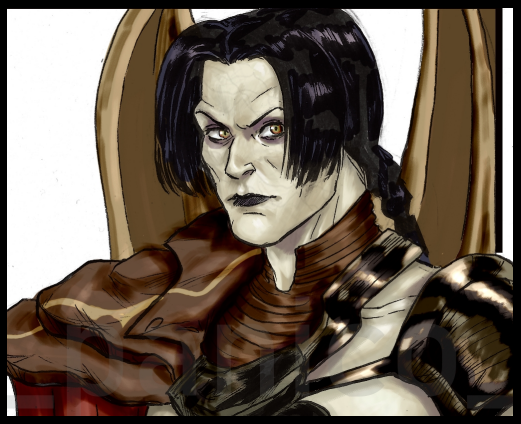
Of course, the camera and the abilities of the characters has to be reworked. We need to return to the third person Action Adventure camera direction of the prior games. Raziel and Kain's climb ability needs to have more logical sense than here's a wall with striations on it, vs another stone wall they somehow can't sink their claws into. Batform and jump for Kain should have more combat options, etc.

A return of Wolf Form, or a Bestial upgrade for Kain (would be great to see more of the old animals, cultures, and enemies, from Blood Omen, also, like werewolves). Lots of things can be reworked. Oh, and Defiance definitely needs its own music soundtrack, not just a mostly reworking of Soul Reaver 2's, and must, MUST have musical additions, where appropriate, to the cutscenes. Better sound effects also are needed. When a blade hits armor, it needs to sound like it.

> What was the hardest thing to do?

Going back and forth between working on models outside of the game to seeing how they looked in the game. After about the hundredth time re-exporting this single bunch of textures and getting back to the point in the game to see if they work right, or not, then doing it a hundred more, it just gets very tedious. Having some sort of real time view of things in engine working simultaneously as I work on models and textures is the blessing that's needed here. And I guess in summation, time and the will to continue doing it week after week, month after month, into years. All by myself. It's not an easy task.

Laura Panico



Website:
laura_panico_artofficial
Soul Healer
Fav LoK game: *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver*
Fav LoK character: *wraith Raziel*
Other games I enjoy: *Genshin Impact, Prince of Persia the lost crown, Street Fighter II*
Other hobbies: *traveling (discover new places), photography, read books & comics, animal care*

INTERVIEW

> What is your first memory from the LoK series?

It was almost the end of the summer of 1999, towards the end of August, I saw my older brother again after a couple of weeks and he showed me the first advertisement announcing the release of Soul Reaver in a computer video game magazine (I attach the image similar to that of the magazine, with the difference that it only had a black background and the Italian release date).

> Do you have a favourite LoK character you like to draw the most?

My favorite characters to draw, besides Raziel, are Vorador and Janos Audron.

> Which medium do you prefer? Digital or paper?

80% traditional - 20% digital
Most of my design and development work is done in traditional art, the subsequent editing phase (cleaning of the drawing, layout, corrections, assembly, captions and balloons) and backdrop creation is done digitally.

> Do you prefer drawing in black and white/grey or in colours?

I prefer to create a *clean line drawing*, sketch or ink that is useful, and then do more tests between gray scales, screens or various color styles, because the added value of the clear line is to have more free experimentation.

> Can you tell us more about the Soul Healer project? How did it come about? Which characters will be returning from LoK and what are the new ones? Is there a release date?

● This project, more recently titled Legacy of Kain: Soul Healer, was initially a vague episodic thought that only in recent years did I decide to develop alongside a small team of experts on the saga. Starting from small narrative nuclei, we clarified what the purpose of the project was, that is: to clarify and fully tell the possible events of the history of Nosgoth, changing the point of view from the one already known in game and going deeper into thoughts and emotions of the main characters. This writing work required a long time of study (in script, drawing style and comic editing), refinement of the writing, choices on which characters to use, when and how to manage the information useful to the reader, cuts and improvements in combining different modalities and narratives.
● I chose to believe in the project and wanting to make it the best possible was born both from the need to tell and from the creative need to experiment with new and hybrid narrative systems with respect to the creation of comics of a good quality level.
● The characters that will be seen in the comic are obviously those known in the main trilogy of Raziel's story and most of those known in the episode of Blood Omen 2, we have also included the cut characters such as the minor vampires of Soul Reaver 2 and the Priestess of Soul Reaver which will also show itself in an unexpected guise! We also chose to pay tribute to the Nosgoth backstories written by George Kelion. Most of the new secondary characters are an active part of the story, a characterizing part of their historical period, useful for the growth of the primary characters; based on the specific phase of the story they have an appearance and action useful for the purpose, with the exception of Laurel, a female Razielim character who is a constant presence in the fan comic, created with the aim of inserting herself between Kain, Raziel and the other secondary characters to show a new point of view on events.
● Chapter 0 and the first chapters are coming out by the end of this year on the occasion of Soul Reaver's 25th anniversary, the platform will be defined shortly and the date communicated on official public social networks.

The next two pages feature a couple of artworks done by Laura. The Priestess artwork was made as an exclusive for this art book!

lucinvampire

Website: *Tales of Nosgoth*
Fav LoK game: *Blood Omen*
Fav LoK character: *Janos Audron*
Other games I enjoy: *Sadly I don't get too much time to game nowadays but I do love a bit of Warframe, Assassins Creed, Bayonetta, Prince of Persia.*
Other hobbies: *Cosplay, movies, music*

INTERVIEW

> Why have you specifically chosen Nosgoth to make a website about?

It was around the time when Nosgoth was getting closed down and Square Enix said that the official website and forums would be deleted. The thought of all those years worth of artwork and lore being lost was heart-breaking, especially after being part of the community for so long. I know a lot of people shouted it's not canon as soon as the game was cancelled but it just seemed such a shame for all that hard work and information to be lost.

> Was it difficult to track all the info, screenshots, etc about Nosgoth?

It took quite a while of going through the website, forums and internet, but thankfully the Legacy of Kain community is filled with some dedicated fans, and some were kind enough to provide me with content they had saved. Everyone who contributed made the site and group what it is today, and I am truly thankful for them and all their hard work to help preserve this part of the legacy.

> What drove you into LoK cosplaying and cosplaying in general?

Chance or maybe fate? The holiday I was supposed to go on got cancelled last minute by the travel agent and we tried to find something else to do in that time, there was a comic con happening in London so we decided to go, I think in the spur of the moment when I agreed to going I said something along the lines of "yeah but only if we can dress up". I had some wings and blue body paint in storage from when I did a LARP inspired Ancient character, so I just decided to go as Janos. I made the costume in a week and it all started from there really. As Legacy of Kain has been the fandom I've followed for so long it was inevitable really that I'd end up getting sucked into cosplaying the characters from the series as they hold a special place in my heart.

> What were the biggest challenges in making LoK inspired costumes?

The hardest thing I think is making the costumes function in the real world when taken from the games. I don't think the games' designers think how would this character manage their day to day activities whilst wearing this,

or at least I don't think cosplayers would have been considered back when the games were being developed. It's things like how do I make these trousers stay up or this top not fly apart when I move, how am I going to walk or sit in this costume, those are the things that are most challenging.

> What are the most comfortable and least comfortable costumes you made?

This is a tough call, I don't think any Legacy of Kain costume I've made would sit in the comfortable category, a lot of the cosplays have masks so breathing and seeing is pretty hard, so I'd have to say that paired with cloven hooves and hands Elder Kain ticks the hardest box. As for the easiest I'd probably say Cenobite's Hood Prophet mainly because I can hide my glasses under the mask so I can easily see and she has hands so that's always a plus, the only awkward thing really was the backlers.

> What other game series do you enjoy cosplaying as?

I haven't done too many other game related cosplays; I've mainly done Legacy of Kain and stuff from films or tv. I've done a couple of Warframe ones, but I think my favourite non-Legacy of Kain game one would be Bayonetta, as it really helped with my self-confidence but also because of fan reactions, if I can make someone happy then that's what really makes a cosplay enjoyable…well that and being able to sit down throughout the day.

Oasis Nadrama

Website: *Vademonium, Tetracosmos, Pantagrame, Les Mondes-miroirs... Various professional novels, webcomics, etc. All of my works can be discovered on oasis-nadrama.com*
Fav LoK game: *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver*
Fav LoK character: *Raziel. An intense, fragile, desperately self-righteous soul.*
Other games I enjoy: *All of the Silent Hill series, Alien Isolation, Final Fantasy VII, Demon's Souls, Deus Ex Human Revolution, various horror indie games*
Other hobbies: *Reading all kinds of books (prioritarily hard scifi/horror), watching science fiction movies, finding bizarre indie comic books, learning about ancient civilizations, new technologies, history, linguistics and anthropological perspectives.*

INTERVIEW

> How did you first hear about Legacy of Kain?

I was twelve! I read about it in Playstation Magazine (the French one), issue 20, in Spring 1998. Back then, the article optimistically announced that Soul Reaver would be available in stores by November.

> Do you usually play in English or French? How is the French dubbing in comparison?

Most of the time I play in French out of sheer nostalgia. It's how I discovered these games when I was a kid. But very regularly, I still play them in English, because the French version loses a lot of subtleties and contains some dramatic translation mistakes. And let's be honest, the original interpretation is magnificent, invaluable, stellar. Overall, the French translation did its best with limited time, in an era where there was not any respect for the media as an art form. Soul Reaver 2 particularly was excellently translated.

The voice acting itself is EXTRAORDINARY. Bernard Lanneau (Raziel) and Benoît Allemane (Kain) are legends in the francophone world and they poured all of their soul and energy into this tragedy. In the final scene of Legacy of Kain: Defiance, you can hear how sad they are to say goodbye to these characters. Their interpretation is deeper, rawer, more emotional than Simon's and Michael's.

> You have been a part of several fan projects. Any which stands out to you or would like to give a shout out to?

I have a tender spot for Les Chroniques Nosgothiques, a now dead and offline series of French fanfictions written with various other authors (the run went from 2004 to 2007 if I remember well, it covered hundreds of pages).

There were a lot of literary flaws and some frustrating cooperation moments, but I will never forget this era. Les Chroniques Nosgothiques were a formative experience for multiple now professional artists, and inspired me to create my first published novel.

In terms of pure quality, and when it comes to projects I have -not- been a part of, the long, impeccable work by, well, you Raina, Bazielim, and TheHylden, particularly stands out. The full HD version of Soul Reaver is a masterpiece, the definitive upgrade the 1999 gem deserved.

> What do you think about narrative in LoK?

Two decades after its untimely interruption, Legacy of Kain is still the best story in the video game media, plain and simple. Soul Reaver and Soul Reaver 2, particularly, as a diptych, constitute one of the most powerful, consistent, creative and surprising tales you will find in science fiction, all media combined. To this day, I'm still astounded at Amy Hennig's work, at her skill to tie together the pieces of a larger mythology, at her talent in expressing ideas through codified, theater-like dialogue, at her instinct for pacing... I could go on and on.

The best quality of the series may be how much it trusts the intelligence of its audience. It throws so many sharp science fiction concepts in your face, and it never pauses, it believes you can piece everything together. Soul Reaver 2 ends with a mix of EIGHTH DIFFERENT TIME PARADOXES and bets that you'll be able to keep up. And you do.

> If you could direct the future of the series, what would you like to see? Remakes, reboots, etc?

The true strength of the structure as we know it is how, repeatingly, the franchise enriches its setting with new eras and characters. Both Soul Reaver and Blood Omen 2 vastly expand the world and invite us to discover Nosgoth in entirely new colours. So I would build the series as a succession of trilogies. Solid packages of three games centered around new protagonists. Each time, the new character would be introduced in the first part of the triptych (they could occasionally be foreshadowed in previous episodes) and would conclude their arc in the last part, much like Raziel journeys through Soul Reaver, Soul Reaver 2 and Defiance to meet his fate. This new character would come with their own strengths, flaws and thematics, as well as a new era of Nosgoth history (or a deep look at another realm... What about a Hylden trilogy?). A greater arc of three trilogies, nine games total, would provide an adequate magnitude for a satisfying continuation and conclusion to Legacy of Kain.

PebbleInThePond

Website: *BO2 Conceptual Edition*
Fav LoK game: *Legacy of Kain: Defiance*
Fav LoK character: *Kain*
Other games I enjoy:
Star Wars: Battlefront II (2005)
Lord of the Rings: Battle for Middle-earth II
Hitman: Blood Money
Tomb Raider: Legend
Other hobbies: *Playing Music (Vocals, Guitar, Piano)*

INTERVIEW

> Can you tell us about your mod in detail?

"Blood Omen 2" was my initiation into the "Legacy of Kain" universe. Being the first game I ever played from the series, it gave me the opportunity to experience it as a game on its own. As a kid, I remember starting my journey throughout Meridian, a dark and mysterious setting, capturing that same visual spectrum found in "Batman: The Animated Series" and Francis F. Coppola's adaptation of Bram Stoker's "Dracula", other pieces of media I was very fond of back in those days. Adding to the visual eeriness, decorated with the love child of "gothic" and "steampunk", there were the ambient sound effects. Together with the musical score, they were able to perfectly describe to my auditory senses what my eyes were perceiving.

As a standalone, the story is simple, straightforward and I would dare say it somehow manages to follow the recipe for the classic "hero's journey", but from a reversed-pole's perspective. With cool combat mechanics, spells and weapon systems, hacking and slashing your way towards the next phase in the story is one entertaining experience. With these being said, "Blood Omen 2" is and will always be one of my top favorite video games.

As time passed, going through the other entries from the franchise and life in general, my passion for this series always brought me, full-circle, back to "Blood Omen 2". Other than playing the game – over and over again, I might add – I fondly remember spending hours replaying the end-credits cinematic, listening to the main theme while enjoying the amazing artwork delivered by Steven A. Ross. The imagery was fascinating, bringing me to the realization that the game's atmosphere is what it is, in no small part thanks to its concept art. I also couldn't help but notice the fact that they contained some elements which never made it into the game I played. From there on, my fascination towards "what could have been" started to manifest itself into a set of wings. These wings carried me across the "world wide web", in a quest to learn more, until the day I bumped into the one and only "The Lost Worlds". What I witnessed there was a vast library of documentation and imagery, the work of a person who had the same passion as I did towards cut content, Mr. Ben Lincoln, a man for whom I hold the utmost respect and gratitude. Without his tools and research there would have never been a "Blood Omen 2: Conceptual Edition".

"Blood Omen 2: Conceptual Edition" took shape as part of my inner-most long-time fixation: to have the possibility of switching the main character's outfits throughout the game. After witnessing some of the pre-release material, in which "Kain" was seen using different attires from the one he was wearing in the retail version at certain points during gameplay, I started hunting for solutions towards that outcome. Back in those days, this was a pretty common question asked by other enthusiasts, but the answer was always the same: "The game is hardcoded." / "Not mod-friendly." – a fact which still remains true to this day from many other aspects. For years, I replayed the game while accepting the reality in which I would never be able to see "Kain" wearing his "one-shoulder attire" for his reunion with the Sarafan Lord, among other appealing elements which were changed / scrapped in the final release. Until one year ago...

After a long while, years during which I was away from the virtual world of gaming in order to pursue my professional career and goals, I decided it was time for a break. I was in-between jobs and wanted to give myself some time - some much needed time to reconnect with my inner-self. I then saw the opportunity to journey back into childhood for a brief moment. I took it, all while thinking to myself << What could be better than replaying "Blood Omen 2"? >>. So there I was, revisiting Meridian after almost a decade. Even though the experience was as enjoyable as I remembered, I couldn't help but notice some of the faults the game came with, both technical as well as lore-wise. To this day, if anyone asks me what I would do differently if I were to remake the game myself, the answer lies with its predecessor, "Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain". Reimagined with some "role-playing" elements, an open-world to explore and more references to its previous entry - the combination between these and its already-existing atmosphere is something I would wish to experience while I was on my death bed. Let's think about the significance it would have towards the original character created by Denis Dyack, to see "Kain" infiltrating the "Upper City" in his "bat-form", or roaming the "Canyons" while morphed into a "wolf". Together with a slightly modified ending, in which "Kain" would revisit the ruined "Pillars of Nosgoth" as a homage to the edifice – soon to be the heart of his empire – that triggered all these events, this game as a concept would be brought closer to justice in front of the whole franchise.

Now leaving hypothesis aside, after recently going back to the vanilla version of "Blood Omen 2", a game which has never been touched by the modding community, the idea of taking the matters into my own hands seemed like the only way I would ever – at least try to – get the chance to see the following brought to life into the actual game: switching the main character's costumes, bringing the design closer to its concept art and restoring some of the cut content. Armed with the "Soul Spiral", a tool designed through the combined efforts of Ben Lincoln and Andrew Fradley, and backed up by a hex editing software, I started studying all the game's files along with each and every line of their code. After weeks of trying to understand some of the logic behind them, I was finally ready to start playing around. Since most of the information was barely decipherable, I was still going in blind. Weeks started turning into months when I managed to get my very first successful result. One thing I will never forget is the moment when I loaded the "Upper City" level and saw "Kain" arriving by gondola, wearing his "one-shoulder attire".

VANILLA

CONCEPT ART

CONCEPTUAL EDITION

VANILLA

CONCEPTUAL EDITION

VANILLA

CONCEPT ART

CONCEPTUAL EDITION

Tenaya

Website: *Nosgothic Realm*
Fav LoK game: *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain*
Fav LoK character: *Kain and Vorador*
Other games I enjoy: *Might & Magic, The Elder Scrolls, Vampire: The Masquerade, Dragon Age, Detroit: Become Human, Baldur's Gate 3, Avatar: Frontiers of Pandora, Gord*
Other hobbies: *creating & enjoying art, spending time with my cats, personal growth through learning*

INTERVIEW

> How did you get into cosplay/costumes? Where do you draw your inspiration from?

What I do really isn't cosplay. I've never been an actor, and my goal isn't to recreate someone else's character. But everything I make is inspired by my awe for the creativity that I see go into designing games. If I can incorporate personally meaningful symbolism from a game's mythos, all the better.

> How difficult it is to store all your costumes?

The walls of my living space have been papered in fantasy art ever since I first got my own room as a kid. Before the internet existed as an easy means of self-publication, I hoarded posters and greeting cards. So it's been gratifying to see my own work start to take its place on display.

> What led you to create a website and forums for Legacy of Kain?

Nosgoth.net originated as Soul Reaver Realm in 1998. I had already been very active for months in another close knit online LoK community, so the founder of the future Nosgothic Realm's domain offered me a partnership in exchange for creating and supporting content. Over the next 8 years I managed most fan work submissions, while waiting on promises concerning my role in that partnership which were never realized..

> Do you remember any challenges during the forum days or with hosting?

I was never a forum moderator. That recognition primarily belongs to Infinite Daremo. Full responsibility for the site fell to me in 2007. At that point I knew no web coding. I had never done web design. However, I was already 8 years deep in a project that I wanted to see through. Given how my previous partnership went, I was wary of being dependent on further collaboration. So I spent what would become another 8 years learning to rebuild everything on my own.

> What do you miss the most from the old forum on Nosgothic Realm?

Fortunately, I think the fandom's greatest virtues endure on modern social media. I can still remember joining a LoK chat and discovering that everyone there was from a different country with its own native language. As a kid who always longed to travel but never had the opportunity, that connection to the rest of the world was a gift. I used the Babel Fish translator to communicate with the webmaster of a French LoK fan site and read fan fics in German. In the course of learning how to redesign my site, I was aided by a web designer in Israel and a web developer in Lebanon. Our nations' governments were leading us against each other in deadly violence while we found common ground in enjoying a video game. There are themes in the LoK storyline that transcend culture. Even all these years later, the series continues to inspire creative works of various mediums that require a tremendous amount of dedication. I still find myself interpreting new fiction by relating it to the impact that LoK's world building had on my personal development. And although I've largely moved on from the fandom, I'm grateful to have kept in touch with friends that I met through it.

> What drew you into the world of Legacy of Kain?

At the time of Blood Omen's release I was 14, and had already sought out every source of vampire media that I could covertly get my hands on. Most of the genre was contrived erotica or religious ethnocentrism. Blood Omen's grimdark setting and antihero protagonist were still largely unsung elements, as was designing video games to tell provocative stories. Kain survived a life-altering act of cruelty, only to be completely dehumanized for it. With due bitterness and resentment, he tried harder than anyone to preserve the beauty in his dying world, only to be shown time and again that any choice he made would forever be invalidated by those qualities of his being beyond his control.

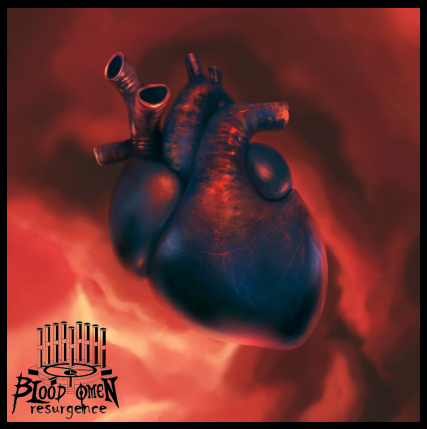
> What did you think about Soul Reaver and Blood Omen 2 when they came out?

Both sequels ultimately disappointed me as a dedicated fan of the previous LoK games. In both cases, it was the publisher's idea to force the designing team's concept into an established universe for streamlined development or marketing value. The advantage this afforded is questionable in hindsight. Legally contesting the rights to products of Silicon Knights' creativity was financially and emotionally depleting to both companies. Soul Reaver could have easily stood on its own to reach a globally broader audience than its predecessor. A great deal of sincere effort was made in Soul Reaver 2 to unite SR's protagonist with the series' roots. Then BO2 happened. Aside from being objectively unpolished, the dimwitted narcissism enshrined by the game's protagonist was frankly insulting to fans of the original title. Kain's name was far from the only bit of lore referenced just enough to leave it frayed with loose ends. Defiance inherited full responsibility for damage control, which I can only imagine detracted from the finished product, and any love that went into creating it.

> What would you like to see in the future of the series?

More than anything, I would like to see moral ambiguity not confused with nihilism or egoism. I want ethical dilemmas to spark thoughtful discussion. A recurring theme throughout the series is the harm done by those who believe they can do no wrong – that people, rather than actions, are good or bad. In the years since the series was left at its last unresolved instalment, everyone who played these games in their youth has grown up. There's an opportunity for the storylines of future games to reflect scenarios of evolved complexity and nuance, complementary to an adult audience's life experience.

Warlordkev



Website: *Blood Omen Resurgence*
Fav LoK game: *Blood Omen*
Fav LoK character: *Kain*
Other games I enjoy: *Castlevania, Shadow Hearts*
Other hobbies: *Cycling, Gaming, Gaming Dev*

INTERVIEW

> At what stage is your project at present and what is your vision for it? What inspired you to start working on this?

Hard to give an exact set point to its current progress but it is definitely coming along well and speeding up greatly thanks to recent combat system reaching its final update. There were a number of reasons I began the project, but the thing that finally got me into finally starting was video streams I saw of a Resident Evil 2 fan remake by Rod Lima on YouTube.

> What level of graphical fidelity are you trying to achieve? Can we look forward to some realistic blood and gore?

Oh most certainly plenty of blood and gore. Graphical detail is something I plan to have as good as I can with my limitations but also realising I want everyone to be able to play it not just those with super computers.

> How faithful will you stay to the original? Can we expect some extra additions such as new dungeons, powers, etc.?

Originally I planned for an updated exact remake of the original. Now however I do indeed plan to add a few extra locations and many of the original locations reimagined for a third person style gameplay. Same goes for powers and combat, from isometric to third person will require a lot of gameplay and mechanical changes.

> Will you keep the script the same? Are you using the original voice files and do you plan to add extra voice acting in?

The original script will definitely remain intact perhaps with some clean up to quality. The music will be updated with tracks worked on by the talented musician that worked on Blood Omnicide. I do also think some new voice work will be added to some NPCs especially.

> What is your experience with UE4 so far and are you planning to move over to UE5? If yes, will it be challenging?

I am no expert by any stretch haha, I follow a great deal of tutorials and a lot of time problem solving that has given me enough room to either know how to make or

what to look up in order to make it. As to UE5 I definitely do intend to go over to it, just its new lighting and nanite systems alone will greatly increase quality of the project.

> Will the levels have the same layouts or will there be changes? How will you reconcile the Pillars clearing? As it appears different in each game.

Many of the early levels will look familiar to fans of the original but as the game progresses there will be more changes to keep things fresh to new and old fans of the game. The pillars clearing is certainly a tough one just because of its many changes in each game. My plans are to attempt to combine a lot of the changes into something cohesive that will have as many of the important changes kept that still work together.

> With the discovery of BO Alpha, we now know the overall map had much fewer teleporters and the maps were more interconnected. There is an extra cemetery on way out of the Pillars which features ghosts, but it is not in the final game. Would adding these to your project be something you would like to do?

Absolutely, my plan at the minute is to include some teleporters, as there are some locations that either couldn't be reached otherwise or taking the sequel games into account would rewrite a lot of the geography without them, but also use a great deal of level streaming to lessen loading times as much as i possibly can.

> Will you include some quality of life improvements as the original can feel quite clunky at times (especially in combat and traversal)? Example: Kain walks so slowly, would you consider making him run and jump to increase mobility? The wolf form could then be used to jump across larger gaps instead, etc.

Most definitely yes, Kain will be able to run and dodge with a certain degree of climbing as well for travel, jumping is something that has been requested that I'm working on including that won’t make wolf form redundant. A few other improvements I currently have included or plan to include:

- Kain will be able to switch between two spells and four artifacts to cut down on constant inventory switches.
- 2 separate forms to change into.
- Dodging as i mentioned before will also be part of combat.
- The ability to stealth kill a few enemies if the player feels there are too many to handle.
- Much more fluid movement compared to the originals
- And possibly the ability to switch between two different weapons as well (still deciding on that one)

> What is your favourite weapon, spell and ability in BO?
Like many I enjoyed the Reaver blade but my true favourite was Implode, I loved that item.

DCAB

Website: *ArtStation*
Fav LoK game: *Soul Reaver*
Fav LoK character: *Kain*
Other games I enjoy: *God of War, XCom 2, Spider-Man, Horizon Zero Dawn, Tekken, Gran Turismo, Arkham Asylum, Chess*
Other hobbies: *Building Lightsabers, Working and driving my 93 Toyota Supra, drawing, painting, sculpting, 3D sculpting*

INTERVIEW

> How did you get into the Crystal Dynamics team?

I applied for the job :) My cousin Arnold was already working there and I wanted to work on something fun and new after Comanche 2, Armored Fist 2, F-22 Lightning II, and other voxel based games.

> What is your favourite book about art?

Understanding Comics by Scott McCloud and Creature Core by Yasushi Nirasawa

> Where did you look for inspiration when you were working on Soul Reaver?

Brom's art, Creature Core, Lebbeus Woods' architecture, Abandoned Places, Go Nagai's Devilman, Brian Froud's art, various Japanese horror artists, The Cabinet of Dr. Calagari, Madman, and Katsuya Terada's art.

> What it was like trying to get image references by scanning books? Was it harder to get things out of books if they were in colour or would colour be added later?

It was a very careful and dedicated process. We had to scan at a high enough resolution to get the image, but not so high that the dot pattern would break down. Identifying what parts and pieces we needed was a lot of trial and error. Color was fine, but we'd usually pull back the saturation later because we were using 4 bit color for textures (16 colors) to save memory, and using vertex coloring to adjust the colors later.

> Where you using any Art Deco elements/motifs when creating a medieval-esque fantasy landscape?

Deco, Nouveau, and even Arabic designs were used wherever we felt it worked best to show the different elements of the architect's authors.

(Arabic was reserved for Vampires) We wanted to show the different elements of time as humanity evolved over the past 1000 years. But then we wanted them to feel like a lost civilization as the Vampires took over. So depending on when/where it was conquered, the architectural evolution would have been stopped when the people were killed off. That's why some areas are medieval and some are more industrial.

> How did it feel to work on Tomb Raider: Legend, when back in the day, Lara was considered Raziel's competitor?

It was very validating. Lara was considered the most recognizable game character at the time besides Mario, so we had a lot of reverence for the title and character. Lara ended up with a lot more baggage and responsibility because everyone had expectations on the character. Ultimately it was a great privilege to work on the title, esp with all the extras we added to the XBOX 360 version.

> Do you remember any particular texture taken from a strange or obscure place being used in an unconventional way?

I had few scans of crinoids (Paleozoic worm fossils) that I found fascinating and incorporated into the Elder God walls for both Spectral and Material. We also used a ton of textures' UV's rotated in different ways to get mileage out of them. We only had 4 mb of vram per streaming section (the room you left, the room you were in, and the next area you were about to enter). So we could sometimes make patterns by using triangles rotated in certain ways to make a gestalt that read like a pattern of tile with a zig zag pattern.

> What was the most frustrating part of texture work for you across all LoK games?

For the first game it was that every triangle had to be individually assigned, then turned manually to match the adjacent triangle to make a square. This was super labor intensive. Also, just not having enough memory to make every area unique. We had to make some fairly repetitive areas and rely on vertex lighting to subtly change the colors.

> If you could, would you change anything about Soul Reaver and why?

If we could do it with more memory I'd add more encounters, because sometimes the game felt al little empty. I'd also add more custom sculpted architecture, to make each area more distinct. I'd want Turel in there because it would complete the conquering of the brethren. I'd probably reduce the amount of block puzzles in the Zephonim area lol. And I'd add the priestess back in, because she had some pretty cool encounters set up for Raziel. I'd want possession to come back because playing as another creature, even if only to solve a puzzle, sounds like it would be a lot of fun. And I'd want to make the Undercity, which looked amazing but ultimately didn't fit into the PS1's limited rendering capacity.

> Which character's backstory would you flesh out more if given the opportunity?

I'd want to add even more back story to each of the brethren. But if I had to choose one, I'd want to do Rahab. His journey of pain and overcoming water would be really interesting to know more about. Why did he gravitate to the water given that it burns like acid to Vampires?

> Why do you think the fans keep coming back to Legacy of Kain even after 20 years? Do you replay the games from time to time too? Which one is your favourite?

I think people ultimately love the writing, voice acting, and art all working together to create an experience. Given what games looked and played like back in 99, it was a bold and powerful creation that I think was groundbreaking. The experience showed everyone that dark, gothic experiences could be amazing, and that characters could be more complex than a muscular guy with a gun.I replay Soul Reaver every so often, and SR2 as well when the mood strikes me. I think original SR is still my favorite because of the setting: it was like City of Lost Children meets the Cabinet of Dr. Caligari. There was more mystery in the setting, and we could do more environmental storytelling that wasn't bound strictly to a medieval setting.

> Do you know about the sconce statue in Defiance? Viscera, who is modding Defiance, is asking who to curse at, as that statue is really high poly and repeated a lot.

LOL not sure which sconce statue you mean.. Vorador's mansion with the spears? The Hylden statues? I mean she can ultimately yell at me, since I was the Art Director lol

The next page features originally exclusive Patreon pieces by Daniel.

Raina Audron

Website: *The Ancient's Den*
Fav LoK game: *Soul Reaver*
Fav LoK character: *Raziel*
Other games I enjoy: *Alan Wake, CONTROL, Crash Bandicoot, Devil May Cry, Exhumed, F.E.A.R, Gex, Half-Life, Hifi-Rush, Life is Strange, Mass Effect, Metal Gear Solid, Okami, Ratchet and Clank, Resident Evil, Silent Hill, Shin Megami Tensei, SOMA, Spyro the Dragon, Talos Principle, Tomb Raider, and many others*
Other hobbies: *Drawing and painting, aquariums, listening to game OST, modding*

INTERVIEW

> Tell us all about your introduction to the series. How did you first become immersed in the world of *Legacy of Kain*?

It all started with my parents buying me a PlayStation in 1998. I instantly got interested in 3D action adventure games and platformers, I had a 486DX computer previously. Tomb Raider 3 was my first proper 3D game. Still have fond memories of it, trying to get my gripes with the tank controls as 11 year old but finished it and ended up loving the TR games so much, I bought the remaining entries later.

Another thing which I got my parents to buy me was the Czech version of the official PlayStation magazine which came with demo discs! Was not cheap but it was my only source of news at the time as we did not have internet at home. My first one had a big Metal Gear Solid review in it and Soul Reaver preview too! This was the very first time I have seen Raziel. I was really intrigued by this game as it looked similar to Tomb Raider (the pages had Raziel flipping blocks around).

I was looking forward to the review and a demo which promised to be in the next issue, no. 43, and it was a literal life changer. It featured an absolutely breathtaking trailer which we dubbed Sanctus Christus due to the song by Chris Payne and also a short, playable Lighthouse demo. I spent so many hours in both! I especially enjoyed the gliding mechanic and also the fact that you could impale and reave souls. It felt fresh in comparison to Tomb Raider which had no melee combat. I could not wait for the game to come out but then the news about the delay hit and we had to wait until 16th August instead.

> You were perhaps the first *Legacy of Kain* YouTuber of note, with your channel – launched in 2007 – providing fellow fans countless valuable insights into the games' cut content, glitches, and other curiosities. More recently, it has provided regular news on *LoK*, documented newly uncovered prototype builds, and hosted deep lore breakdowns. Can you outline your journey on YouTube over the years for us?

I still remember my first video tests of doing the flying glitch! My big inspiration was always the Lost Worlds fan site by Ben Lincoln and it was then when I got the idea to make a YouTube channel and show off the various glitches and unreachable areas. Later, I also extensively covered the May beta of Soul Reaver which was a huge discovery as it has so many differences. Over time, you do run out of glitches so when COVID hit and we got our hands on the mythical alpha builds, we had a lot of material to cover! The idea for deep lore explanations emerged around the same time and thanks to furlough, we could fully realize these videos as they take a lot of time to assemble due to all the video material and recordings needed.

> Some of the earliest among your many contributions to the *Legacy of Kain* fandom include work on a number of fangames, including Ascare's *Fall of Nosgoth*, Vincent Chevalier's *Legacy of Kain: Revival*, and *Legacy of Kain: Prodigal Sons*. You even co-designed and released a full-fledged trading card game based on the series! Tell us about your early beginnings as a developer on these projects.

I was in college back then and used to stay behind on school computers as it was a free source of internet back then. The other alternative was to go to an internet café! I used to bring floppy disks with me and put material from the Lost Worlds on there so I could read about it at home. I always loved to do traditional drawings but that was the time when I started to draw pixel graphics with mouse and found out about Ascare's LoK RPG game. I offered to help him and drew the portraits of the vampires for him. Later, I contacted Vincent, who was working on Legacy of Kain: Revival, and drew the sprites for Kain (animating him was difficult as I had not done it before), other characters and objects. It was a fun project and one of the rare ones which was fully completed and released. For Prodigal Sons we did a lot of prototyping and during the early days the thought to do a remake of Soul Reaver emerged.

> From 2013 onwards, you were invited to contribute your extensive *LoK* knowledge and community management skills to Square Enix's multiplayer deathmatch game, *Nosgoth*. How did you find the game overall, and what were your experiences as an advisor and representative of the fandom while it was live?

Being invited to Square Enix London felt incredible! During the summer I got this mysterious email invite to get to meet other fans and play Nosgoth for the first time. We knew there was something called War for Nosgoth thanks to a listing on Steam, so the excitement that LoK may be finally revived was high. I could not believe I was chosen and it was the best day in my life to be able to finally meet my heroes – Ben, Tenaya, Amber, Ardeth and many others. I am so grateful I got the chance to

meet them – it was magical and we spent the first evening dinner in the hotel with some pizzas and listening to Divine Shadow's jokes was the best thing ever. I finally felt I found my own people who understand my Soul Reaver obsession and do not consider it just a kid's thing to play video games. It was an amazing way to bond the community together after so many years of dormancy. Huge thanks to Amber and George for organizing it all for us, it shall never be forgotten. If the series does make a return at some point, I hope they may consider hosting such an event for its fans again.

› **Around this time, you supplemented your YouTube platform with a blog: The Ancient's Den, covering the *LoK* series and your presence within the fandom. Share with us some highlights from the activities you have documented here, which range from video game collections to soundtracks to cosplay. What fun have you gotten up to as a fan of *LoK* and lover of video games in general?**

Some findings could not have been added as a video, so a blog seemed an appropriate outlet for these extra findings. One of my most popular articles is "Why was Legacy of Kain cancelled?" aka the History of Legacy Kain where I looked over at the rich history of these games and explore their future prospects, especially since the discovery of the cancelled Dark Prophecy game which was briefly developed by Ritual Entertainment. One of the very first articles explains the details of the original ending of Soul Reaver. There was also an ambitious project called Nosgoth Chronicles to remake all the cutscenes in high resolution graphics which alas did not come to fruition but I met some talented people through it. In 2010, one of the projects I started was getting the SR1 soundtrack. I really wanted to listen to it outside of the game and while there was one at LoKmusic.com and later on TLW was great, it was missing the majority of the many vast variations present in the game. I re-recorded this many times since in order to obtain the best quality as it was not until a recent decompile effort by DeeDyne and SalsaGal that we could obtain clean rips without disturbances.

I was also part of projects such as the Dark Prophecy fan novel and Lost Chronicle which was a fan attempt to give the fans some closure. I also got a rare chance to interview Carol Wolf for which I am really grateful. I collected many LoK figures and also magazines which you can find there as well. In 2016, I got the crazy idea to start cosplaying as Raziel, nonetheless, an idea which later expanded to include Lt. Raziel, Rahabim, Ancient Vampire and others. Breathing as wraith Raziel is nearly impossible but it was super fun to be able to do his cool poses in public and many people recognized him at MCM. Lt. Raziel was a lot more breathable but with such large wings my walking resembled more of a crab, so it was a bit tricky not to involuntarily hit anyone, haha!

› **Meanwhile, you became the first individual to take on a extremely ambitious challenge: launching a fan endeavour to remake *LoK: Soul Reaver* with HD assets created from the ground up. Although the *Soul Revenant* project ultimately came to a close in 2020, you and your team did deliver and release a lavishly beautiful tech demo which tantalisingly illustrated the possibilities of a Nosgoth brought up to more modern standards. Speak to us about the evolution of this project and your time as its director.**

Thank you! Francesco and people on our team created a cool demo and I'm glad that our fans got to play it in the end. In hindsight it was certainly a bit too much to handle for a small team, however, even if it did not pan out in the end, the experience itself of working on such a project was invaluable. I learnt so much on how to work in a team and how to tackle issues. I always loved making art and while I was not directly responsible for it later in the project, it certainly contributed to my growth as an artist. The 2D and 3D artists produced some really great new sketches and models, the Dumahim by Sergiy Wursta especially comes to my mind and who can forget the absolutely amazing Kain and Raziel models by The Hylden aka Patrick Johnson?

Daniel Cabuco also emerged in 2012 with a new forum where he allowed us fans to ask questions. It was one of the many forums which I moderated. While it is now sadly gone, it proved to be an invaluable source of information which we could not access anywhere else and now sits on a single page thanks to my LoK Wiki colleague Aevum's diligent efforts. Daniel to this day remains active in the community and his input and passion for the Legacy of Kain series are highly appreciated by all fans.

> After *Soul Revenant* ended, you came to pursue an alternative option: a full HD remaster of the game's textures. While your hard work on this is already extensively documented in this art book, there is always more to say; its success and popularity even landed you professional work in the industry! Any stories you would like to tell which you haven't yet mentioned? How do you look back at the project in hindsight now that it has been released and received so well?

I already knew some Photoshop basics and while my first attempt was just to upscale everything (thanks to Allard), it still needed a ton of editing and characters to be done manually. However, it was Tomb Raider 2 HD which fully started my interest in texture making and I found myself thoroughly enjoying the whole process. I had done some textures in the past but never to this extent. Watching BossLogic manipulate pre-made pieces and thus create a new piece of art during several hours long stream was inspiring to me as well. I learn best by observing and imitating others so this was very useful to me.

When I discovered some source textures for Soul Reaver with my friend Terry, I knew it was something which was calling out to me, something I could not ignore. I had to re-texture the whole game, but the proper way this time. I set out a goal to complete it within a year, for Soul Reaver's birthday. I was determined to do this while working my day job, so almost every evening and weekends I dedicated my free time to find the remaining textures. Assembling the large sheets of grey rock and other walls or floors in the game was the most challenging aspect as the original textures were mostly 64x64 but it was important so I could see the whole picture. Only then I could replace full pieces and cut them up again into squares again. Each area took me about a month, I only took a break in February for a couple of weeks to play Elden Ring, then had to stop and continue with textures. The sense of accomplishment was immense when I revealed it with several trailers, the story trailer still remains my favourite.

Thanks to Biodynamic who provided the music, it was an epic experience! We had a launch stream where I played the game with Mauve as a host, it was honestly great to interact with the fans that night. The mod got so popular, I had to add extra links and even that was not enough. The downloads were so many that it overloaded all of them and I start getting emails and people asking about the dead links. I did not expect such a positive response and was super happy that players still crave the original Soul Reaver experience.

When I got the offer to work on Tomb Raider Remastered, I simply knew I could not turn it down. I was running around my house in pure happiness for a few days, it literally was everything I ever wanted – to work as a texture artist on some of my favourite games! If I told my past self this would be my future, I would have not believed it for sure. It did amount to a lot of stress at points and you have to be prepared for everything. Despite all that, I truly couldn't have imagined a better team of people to work with on these classics. Our team leader, Timur, did a phenomenal job to assemble our team of modders who never worked together before and turned us into a remastering studio, prepared to tackle any challenge. Getting into the game development was my lifelong dream and to become a professional artist was the best career decision for me. Seeing the game receive critical acclaim upon release was just the cherry on top!

> **Finally, what would you personally like to see in the future for the *Legacy of Kain* series?**

As much as I would love to see the final entry in the series and see if Kain finally restores the Pillars, realistically, bringing these old games back and making them playable on the modern platforms I would see as the first priority, it has been over 20 years after all and we all could do with a new playthrough to refresh our memories without having to find fan patches for these games to work. Ideally, the original games should be preserved as they were with some quality of life improvements and cut content restoration if possible. I would like to see remakes of all the games too, especially Blood Omen in full 3D, Witcher style.

However, it is best to avoid traps such as change for the sake of change. It should make sense in the first place and embrace the strengths of the series such as writing, characters, atmosphere, music and improve the weaker parts (repetition, not enough puzzle variations, combat, platforming). Stellar voice acting is a must and if I could, I would make Soul Reaver 2 and Defiance into one game as it was originally intended. We shall see what the future will bring us!

The next page features exclusive art made by Raina for this art book.

PA

for all the Zok fans out there!

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And everyone who has supported me in my Legacy of Kain obsession over all these years. I hope you enjoyed this art book and feel as though you have been transported back to 1999 when we were waiting for the next magazine to read and play the latest demos. Soul Reaver changed everything for me and I would not be where I am now without its profound influence.

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THE ANCIENT'S DEN